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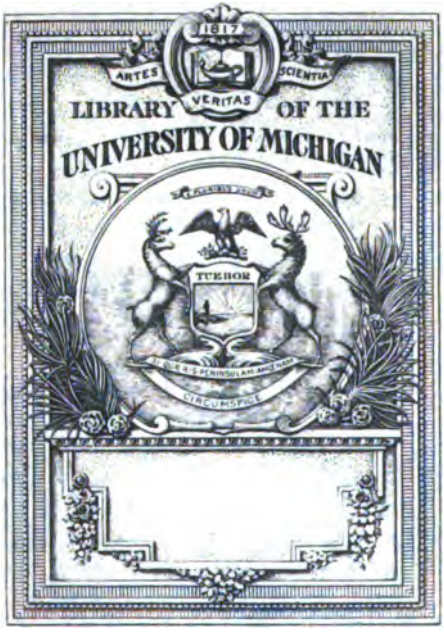
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A

VIEW

Of the PRINCIPAL

DEISTICAL WRITERS

OF THE

Laſt and Preſent CENTURY.

VOL. II.

CONTAINING

OBSERVATIONS

ON

Mr. *HUME*'s PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS;

AND

A DEFENCE of NATURAL and REVEALED RELIGION,

Againſt the Attempts made upon Both in the POSTHUMOUS WORKS of the late Lord Viſcount *BOLINGBROKE*.

WITH

A CONCLUSION, in an ADDRESS to DEISTS and PROFESSED CHRISTIANS.

By *JOHN LELAND*, D. D.

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PREFACE.

WHEN I publiſhed the *View of the Deiſtical Writers* laſt year, it was my purpoſe not to engage any farther in a work of this nature. The favourable acceptance that work met with, and the approbation it has received from perſons of diſtinguiſhed worth, has given me ground to hope that it may be of ſome ſervice to the Chriſtian cauſe. But ſoon after the publication of it, I was put in mind of a conſiderable omiſſion I had been guilty of in not taking notice of Mr. *Hume*, who was looked upon to be one of the moſt ſubtil writers that had of late appeared againſt Chriſtianity. About the ſame time appeared a pompous edition of the works of the late Lord Viſcount *Bolingbroke* in five volumes *4to*, the three laſt of which ſeemed to be principally intended againſt revealed, and even againſt ſome important prin-

ciples of what is usually called natural religion. It was thought therefore that to complete the design I had proposed in publishing the *View of the Deistical Writers*, it would be proper to add a supplement to it relating to the writings of Mr. *Hume* and the late Lord *Bolingbroke*: And that the observations upon them might in that case be more large and particular, than could be expected where a number of writers came under consideration. This was the opinion and advice of some persons, for whose judgment and friendship I have a great regard. This is my apology for appearing again so soon in a controversy, in which otherwise I might perhaps have seemed to be too forward. It was some time after the late Lord *Bolingbroke*'s works were published before I had an opportunity of seeing them. And when I had read them, I found that a distinct and particular consideration of them, which was what was expected of me, would take a much greater compass than I had intended. Accordingly this, with the observations on Mr. *Hume*, have made this part of the work so large, that it exceeds the former in bulk, to which it was intended only as a supplement. The length of the work has given me some concern, as I am not without apprehension that it may exercise the patience of the reader, as well as stand in need of his indulgence: And yet several things which I had prepared are here omitted, for fear of being too tedious. There are some things

in

in the first part of the observations on Mr. *Hume*, which would scarce have deserved to be particularly insisted upon, were it not that they may serve to let the reader into a juster notion of the character and views of that author. Those observations have been also considerably inlarged by the reflections made on the miracles of the *Abbé de Paris*, which therefore I had thoughts of omitting, but I found others were of opinion they might be both agreeable and useful. As to Lord *Bolingbroke*, the many passages extracted out of his works, and the comparing them carefully together, have contributed to lengthen this part of the work; but it could not well be avoided, as I was willing to lay his sentiments before the reader in his own words, that it might appear they were fairly represented. He so frequently seems to contradict in one place what he hath advanced in another, that it is often no easy matter to come at his real sentiments. But I have no where willingly disguised or misrepresented them, nor have concealed the strength of any of his arguments. It would have rendered this work still longer, if I had insisted largely and distinctly on the proofs by which the divine authority of the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and of the revelation there contained, is established. But this has been often done by others to great advantage. And I have endeavoured, as far as I was able, in some former treatises, to place those proofs in a proper light.

All that ſeemed to me to be neceſſary on the preſent occaſion was to take off the force of thoſe objections, which have been advanced with a peculiar confidence by an author of no ſmall note, who appears to have been under no reſtraints, and to have been determined to puſh his objections with all the ſtrength of reaſon, and vivacity of imagination, that he was maſter of.

Since the finiſhing of this work, I find there have been other anſwers to Lord *Bolingbroke* publiſhed, which probably may have rendered this leſs neceſſary. As I live at a great diſtance from the place of their publication, I have not yet had the advantage of ſeeing any of them.

It may reaſonably be ſuppoſed, that the reader will meet with many things here which are already conſidered in thoſe anſwers. But I have ſometimes obſerved, that different anſwers have, inſtead of interfering, tended to illuſtrate and confirm one another. The ſubject has by this means had the advantage of being placed in various lights, and accommodated to readers of different taſtes: And what has been ſlightly paſſed over by one author has been more fully and diſtinctly conſidered by another.

The former volume of this work is now republiſhed with additions and alterations, of the reaſons of which ſome account has been given in an advertiſement prefixed to the new edition. A work of that nature admits, and often requires ſome things of this kind. But that there

may

may be no juſt ground of complaint, care has been taken to print thoſe additions and alterations ſeparately, for the uſe of thoſe who are poſſeſſed of the firſt edition.

I have nothing farther to add here, but that as the volume which is now offered to the public, may be regarded as a continuation of the former, it is conducted, as that was, in a ſeries of letters, which were written and ſent by me to my worthy friend the Rev. Dr. *Wilſon* *, in the form in which they now appear.

* See preface to the firſt volume.

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to

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The CONCLUSION, *in an addreſs to Deiſts and profeſſed Chriſtians.*

ERRATA.

Page. 12, *line* 9, *for* injurious, *read* ingenious.—*P.* 229, *l.* 2, *for* as, *read* no.—*P.* 321, *l.* 4, *for* quiqui, *read* quique; *l.* 7. *for* cura, *read* curæ.—*P.* 331, *l. laſt*, *for* worthy, *read* ſtrictly.—*P.* 356, *l.* 17, *for* policy, *read* polity.—*P.* 497, *l.* 2, *for* It is, *read* His; *l.* 5, *for* wiſhed, *read* looked.—*P.* 646, *l.* 7. *for* from, *read* force.

A VIEW of the

DEISTICAL WRITERS, &c.

In ſeveral LETTERS to a FRIEND.

LETTER I.

Mr. Hume, *a ſubtil and ingenious writer, but extremely ſceptical, and fond of novelty. He propoſes to free Metaphyſics from that jargon and obſcurity, which has ſerved only as a ſhelter to ſuperſtition and error. His doctrine concerning the relation of Cauſe and Effect examined. He declares, that the knowlege of this relation is of the higheſt importance and neceſſity; and that all our reaſonings concerning matter of fact and experience, and concerning the exiſtence of any Being, are founded upon it: Yet he ſets himſelf to ſhew, that there is no real connection between Cauſe and Effect; and that there can be no certain, nor even probable reaſoning, from the one to the other. Reflections upon the abſurdity, and pernicious tendency, of this ſcheme. The inconſiſtencies this writer hath fallen into.*

SIR,

SOON after the publication of the *View of the Deiſtical Writers*, you acquainted me, that ſome judicious perſons expreſſed their ſurpriſe, that no notice had been taken of Mr. *Hume*, who had

LETTER I. openly attacked Chriſtianity, eſpecially in his late *Eſſay on Miracles*; and that in a manner which had ſomething new in it, and different from what others had written before him. The true reaſon was, that I had not at that time read that Eſſay. The only piece which I had then read of that Gentleman's, was his *Moral and Political Eſſays*; in which there was nothing that directly related to the Chriſtian cauſe. But I have ſince peruſed ſome other of his writings, particularly what he calls *Philoſophical Eſſays concerning human Underſtanding*: The ſecond edition of which, with additions and corrections, which is what I have now by me, was publiſhed at *London* in 1750. This Gentleman muſt be acknowleged to be a ſubtil writer, of a very metaphyſical genius, and has a neat and agreeable manner of expreſſion. But it is obvious to every judicious reader, that he hath, in many inſtances, carried ſcepticiſm to an unreaſonable height; and ſeemeth every-where to affect an air of making new obſervations and diſcoveries. His writings ſeem, for the moſt part, to be calculated rather to amuſe, or even confound, than to inſtruct and enlighten the underſtanding: And there are not a few things in them, that ſtrike at the foundation of natural, as well as the proofs and evidences of revealed religion. This appears to me to be, in a particular manner, the character of his *Philoſophical Eſſays*. And you will, perhaps, be of the ſame opinion,

opinion, when you have conſidered the remarks I now ſend you. LETTER I.

If we were to form a judgment of theſe Eſſays, from the account he himſelf is pleaſed to give of them, and of his intention in writing them, our notion of them would be highly to their advantage. Having taken notice of the abſtractedneſs of metaphyſical ſpeculations, he ſays, that he has, "in the following Eſſays, endeavoured to throw ſome light upon ſubjects, "from which, uncertainty has hitherto deterred "the wiſe, and obſcurity the ignorant." He propoſes "to unite the boundaries of the different Species of Philoſophy, by reconciling "profound enquiry with clearneſs, and truth "with novelty"; and thinks "it will be "happy, if, reaſoning in this eaſy manner, he "can undermine the foundations of an abſtruſe philoſophy, which ſeems to have ſerv'd "hitherto only as a ſhelter to ſuperſtition, and "a cover to abſurdity and error*." He undertakes to "baniſh all that jargon, which has ſo "long taken poſſeſſion of metaphyſical reaſonings, and drawn ſuch diſgrace upon them†." And after having repreſented *all the received ſyſtems of Philoſophy*, and all *common Theories, as extremely defective*, he promiſes to "avoid "all jargon and confuſion, in treating of ſuch "ſubtil and profound ſubjects‡."

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 18, 19. † *Ib.* p. 27, 28. ‡ *Ib.* p. 97. 106, 107.

LETTER I. That part of theſe Eſſays, which I ſhall firſt take notice of, and which is indeed of a very uncommon ſtrain, and ſeems to lie at the foundation of many of thoſe extraordinary things which he afterwards advances, is what he propoſes to conſider, p. 47, *& ſeq.*; where he obſerves, that "it is a ſubject worthy curioſity, "to enquire what is the nature of that evi- "dence, which aſſures us of any real exiſtence "and matter of fact, beyond the preſent te- "ſtimony of our ſenſes, or the records of our "memory." He obſerves, that "this part of "philoſophy has been little cultivated either by "the antients or moderns." But tho' it is difficult, it may be "uſeful, by deſtroying that "implicit faith and credulity, which is the bane "of all reaſoning and free enquiry *." After ſuch a pompous profeſſion, one would be apt to expect ſomething extremely deſerving of our attention. Let us therefore examine into his ſcheme, that we may know what it really is, and then our way will be clear to make the neceſſary remarks upon it.

He obſerves, that "the relation of cauſe and "effect is neceſſary to the ſubſiſtence of our "ſpecies, and the regulation of our conduct "in every circumſtance and occurrence of hu- "man life. Without this, we ſhould never "have been able to adjuſt means to ends, nor "employ our rational powers either to the "producing of good, or avoiding of evil †."

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 47, 48, 49. † *Ib.* p. 89, 90.

And,

And, accordingly, he expreſly declares, that LETTE
"if there be any relation, any object, which I.
"it imports us to know perfectly, it is that of
"cauſe and effect. On this we found all our
"reaſonings, concerning matter of fact and ex-
"perience: And by this alone we retain any
"aſſurance concerning objects that are removed
"from the preſent teſtimony of our memory
"and ſenſes;" and that "the exiſtence of any
"Being can only be known by arguments from
"its cauſe, or its effect *." It appeareth then, that by his own acknowlegement, it is of the higheſt importance to know the relation of cauſe and effect. Let us now ſee what inſtruction he gives us with regard to that relation.

He abſolutely denies, that this relation can poſſibly be known *a priori*; and aſſerts, that it entirely ariſes from experience †: That it is this only that "teaches us the nature and bounds
"of cauſe and effect, and enables us to infer
"the exiſtence of one object from that of ano-
"ther ‡." But he takes a great deal of pains to ſhew, that experience cannot furniſh a reaſonable foundation for ſuch an inference. He had laid it down as a principle, that all arguments from experience can at beſt only be probable. But he will not allow even this, in the preſent caſe: He ſets himſelf to prove, that "not ſo
"much as any probable arguments can be
"drawn from cauſe to effect, or from effect

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 123. 258. † *Ib.* p. 50. 52, 53. ‡ *Ib.* p. 258.

LETTER I.

" to cauſe *:" That " the conjunction of the " effect with the cauſe is entirely arbitrary, not " only in its firſt conception, *a priori*, but " after it is ſuggeſted by experience †:" That, " indeed, in fact, we infer the one from the " other; but that this is not by a chain of rea- " ſoning; nor is there any medium which may " enable the mind to draw ſuch an inference ‡. " The only ground of ſuch an inference, is the " ſuppoſed reſemblance between the paſt and " and the future; but that it is impoſſible " any argument, from experience, ſhould prove " that reſemblance: And yet if there be not " ſuch a reſemblance, all experience becomes " uſeleſs, and can give riſe to no inference or " concluſion §." He poſitively aſſerts, that " we know only by experience the frequent " conjunction of objects, without being ever " able to comprehend any thing like con- " nection between them. ‖" And he frequently obſerves, that the connection is only in our own thoughts or conceptions, not in the things themſelves; and reſolves the conjunction between cauſe and effect, and the inference drawn from the one to the other, wholy into cuſtom; that it is a " cuſtomary connection " in the thought or imagination betwixt one " object, and its uſual attendant §§;" that cuſtom, he ſometimes calls *a Habit* ‖‖; and re-

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 62, 63. † *Ib.* p. 53, 54. ‡ *Ib.* p. 60, 61. § *Ib.* p. 65, 66. ‖ *Ib.* p. 114. §§ *Ibid.* p. 123. ‖‖ *Ib.* p. 73, 74. 91. 120.

preſents

preſents it as owing to a repetition of acts; at other times, he aſcribes it to an *inſtinct*, or *mechanical tendency*, and repreſents it as a neceſſary *act of the mind*, and *infallible in its operations* *: Yet afterwards, ſpeaking of the ſame cuſtom or inſtinct, he ſays, that, like *other inſtincts, it may be fallacious and deceitful* †. LETTER I.

The great argument he produces, and upon which he lays the greateſt ſtreſs, to ſhew that we can have no certainty in our concluſions concerning the relation of cauſe and effect, nor reaſon from one to the other, is, that we have no idea of that connection which unites the effect to the cauſe, or of the force, power, or energy, in the cauſe, which produces the effect; nor, conſequently, any medium whereby we can infer the one from the other. He ſets himſelf particularly to ſhew, that neither external objects give us the idea of power, nor reflections on the operations of our own minds ‡.

If what our author offers on this head, had been only to diſplay the ſubtilty of his metaphyſical genius, and ſhew how little we are able diſtinctly to explain the manner even of thoſe things of which we have the greateſt certainty, we ſhould have allowed him to amuſe himſelf, and his readers, with a little philoſophical play. But what he here advances, concerning cauſe and effect, power and connection, he makes

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 73. 91. † *Ib.* p. 251. ‡ *Ib.* p. 105, 106.

LETTER I. the foundation of concluſions relating to matters of great importance,

——Hæ nugæ ſeria ducunt
In mala——

By endeavouring to deſtroy all reaſoning, from cauſes to effects, or from effects to cauſes; and not allowing, that we can ſo much as probably infer the one from the other, by arguing either *a priori*, or from experience, he ſubverts, as far as in him lies, the very foundation of thoſe reaſonings, that are drawn from the effects which we behold in the frame of the univerſe, to the exiſtence of one ſupreme, intelligent, all-powerful cauſe; and accordingly we ſhall find, that he himſelf afterwards applies this principle to this very purpoſe. Another uſe that he makes of this doctrine concerning cauſe and effect, is what we would not have expected from it, to confound all difference between phyſical and moral cauſes; that the latter have the ſame kind of cauſality with the former. This is the purport of his eighth Eſſay, which is concerning *Liberty* and *Neceſſity* *. Though if he argued conſiſtently, he muſt deny that there is any ſuch thing in nature as *Neceſſity*, or *Neceſſary Connection*; or that there is either phyſical or moral cauſe at all.

You will ſcarce expect, that I ſhould enter upon a laborious confutation of ſo whimſical a ſcheme, though propoſed to the world with great pomp,

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 129, *et ſeq.*

and

and represented by the author himself as of *vast importance*. I shall content myself with making some general observations upon it. LETTER I.

And first, whereas this writer frequently, throughout these Essays, lays a mighty stress upon experience, as the great guide of human life, and the only foundation of all our knowlege, especially with respect to matter of fact, and the existence of objects: He here plainly endeavours to shew, that there can be no arguing from experience at all; nor can any reasonable conclusion be drawn from it: For he will not allow, that any argument can be drawn, or inference made, from experience, but what is founded on the supposed relation or connection betwixt cause and effect. If therefore there be no relation or connection betwixt cause and effect at all, in the nature of things, which it is the whole design of his reasoning on this subject to shew; then all certainty of experience, all proof from it, entirely fail; all experiences, as he himself expresses it; *becomes useless, and can give rise to no inference or conclusion* *.

Secondly. Another remark I would make upon Mr. *Hume*'s way of arguing, is, that it proceeds upon a wrong foundation, and which is contrary to truth and reason; *viz.* that we cannot have any reasonable certainty of the truth of a thing, or that it really is, when we cannot distinctly explain the manner of it, or how it is. The sum of his argumentation, as I have already

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 66.

hinted

LETTER I. hinted, with relation to cauſe and effect, is, that we cannot be certain of any ſuch thing, as power or energy, becauſe we cannot conceive or explain preciſely wherein it conſiſts, or how it operates. But this is a very fallacious way of reaſoning: Though we cannot metaphyſically explain the manner in which the cauſe operateth upon the effect, yet we may, in many caſes, be ſure that there is a connection between them; and that, where there are certain effects produced, there are powers correſpondent or adequate to the production of thoſe effects. The mind, in ſuch caſes, when it ſees an effect produced, is led, by a quick and undoubted proceſs of reaſoning, to acknowlege that there muſt be a cauſe which hath a power of producing it; or elſe we muſt ſay, that it is produced without any cauſe at all, or that nothing in nature hath any power of producing it; which is the greateſt of all abſurdities. He urgeth, that "it muſt be allowed, that when we know "a power, we know that very circumſtance "in the cauſe, by which it is enabled to pro- "duce the effect." And then he asks, "Do "we pretend to be acquainted with the nature "of the human ſoul, and the nature of an idea, "or the aptitude of the one to produce the "other*?" But certainly we may know, that there is ſomething in the cauſe which produceth the effect, though we cannot diſtinctly explain what that circumſtance in the cauſe is, by

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 110, 111.

which

which it is enabled to produce it. We must not deny, that there is in the mind a power of raising up ideas, and recalling them, and fixing the attention upon them, because we cannot explain how this is done. The argument Mr. *Hume* offers to prove, that we can have no assurance of the reality of force or power; *viz.* because we cannot distinctly conceive or explain how it operateth, would equally prove that we cannot be sure that we have any ideas at all, because we cannot well explain the nature of an idea, or how it is formed in the mind. He himself, on another occasion, observes against *Malebranche*, and the modern *Cartesians*, who deny all power and activity in second causes, and ascribe all to God; that "we are indeed "ignorant of the manner in which bodies ope-"rate upon one another; and so we are of the "manner or force by which a mind, even the "Supreme mind, operates, either on itself or "on Body. Were our ignorance therefore "a sufficient reason for rejecting any thing, we "should be led into that principle of refusing "all energy to the Supreme Being, as much as "to the grossest matter *." He here seems to censure it as a wrong way of arguing, to deny that a thing is, because we cannot distinctly conceive the manner how it is; or to make our ignorance of any thing a sufficient reason for rejecting it: And yet it is manifest, that his own reasoning against power or causality, force

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 117, 118.

or

LETTER I.

or energy, depends upon this principle; and indeed, by comparing the ſeveral parts of his ſcheme, there is too much reaſon to apprehend, that he had it in view to deny all force and energy, and all power whatſoever, in the Supreme, as well as in ſecondary cauſes; or at leaſt to repreſent it as very uncertain. I think this Gentleman would have done better, to have ſaid, as a late injurious author of his own country, "We have no adequate idea of power; "we ſee evidently that there muſt be ſuch a "thing in nature; but we cannot conceive "how it acts, nor what connects the produc-"ing cauſe with the produced effect." Chevalier *Ramſay*'s principles of natural and revealed religion, Vol. I. p. 109.

Thirdly, A third remark is, that many of our author's arguings, on this ſubject, are contrary to the moſt evident dictates of common ſenſe. Such is that, where he aſſerts, that not ſo much as a probable argument can be drawn, in any caſe, from experience, concerning the connection betwixt cauſe and effect; or from whence we may conclude, that from a ſimilar cauſe we may expect ſimilar effects*. Thus, *e. g.* according to his way of reaſoning, it cannot ſo much as probably be concluded from experience, that if a quantity of dry gun-powder be laid in any place, and fire be applied to it, it will cauſe an exploſion; or that if it hath ſuch an effect to day, a like quantity of powder, the

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 61, 62, 63.

ſame

ſame way circumſtanced, will produce the ſame LETTER
effect to-morrow. No probable reaſon can be I.
brought to ſhew, that that which has had the effect in thouſands of inſtances in time paſt, will, though all circumſtances appear perfectly ſimilar, have the ſame effect in time future. He grants, indeed, that, in ſuch caſes, the mind is determined to draw the inference; yet he aſſerts, that the underſtanding has no part in the operation. But ſurely, when, from obſervation and experience, we come to know and judge of the ordinary courſe of nature, the underſtanding may juſtly draw a probable argument or concluſion, that from ſuch and ſuch cauſes, ſo circumſtanced, ſuch effects will follow. This inference is perfectly rational. And it is a ſtrange way of talking, that, even from a number of uniform experiments, we cannot ſo much as probably infer a connection between the cauſe and the effect, the ſenſible qualities and the ſecret powers: The reaſon he gives, is, that "if "there be any ſuſpicion, that the courſe of na- "ture may change; and that the paſt may be "no rule for the future; experience can give "riſe to no inference or concluſion *." But is the probability of a thing deſtroyed, according to any way of reaſoning allowed hitherto, becauſe it is barely poſſible it may happen otherwiſe, though there is ten thouſand to one againſt it? Mr. *Hume*, elſewhere, when arguing againſt miracles, lays it down as a principle,

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 65, 66.

that

LETTER I. that there is a conſtant uniformity in the courſe of nature, never to be violated; but here, in order to ſhew, that no probable reaſon can be brought from experience, concerning the connection of cauſe and effect, he ſuppoſes, that there may be a ſuſpicion that the courſe of nature may change. Thus this Gentleman knows how to aſſume and alter principles, as beſt ſuits his own preſent convenience. Reaſon leadeth us to conclude, that the courſe of nature is the appointment and conſtitution of that moſt wiſe and powerful Being, who made the world, and ſettled that law and order which he judged fitteſt and propereſt; and then reaſon leadeth us alſo to conclude, that, except in very extraordinary caſes, the ſame order will continue; and extraordinary caſes do not hinder the probability of the ordinary courſe. So that reaſon affords a proper medium for a probable concluſion concerning what effects are to be expected. He affirms, indeed, that all inferences of this kind are only the effects of cuſtom or habit, not of reaſoning *. But why is cuſtom or habit here mentioned in oppoſition to reaſon, or as excluſive of it? May they not both concur? It is evident, that they often go together, and mutually ſtrengthen one another. Cuſtom alone, without reaſon, is often not to be depended on: But in this caſe, reaſon gives its ſuffrage; and, in all arguings in experimental philoſophy, reaſon argues from ſimilar cauſes

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 73, 74, *et paſſim.*

to ſimilar effects. It is by reaſon we draw thoſe inferences, and the inferences are rational. It muſt not be ſaid, that in this caſe there is no reaſoning at all; but that the reaſoning is often ſo obvious, that it carries conviction by the very conſtitution of the human mind, which naturally acquieſceth in it as ſatisfactory. It ſeems evident, that the Great Author of our beings hath formed our minds, ſo as to reaſon in this manner; and he would not have done this, if it had not been both of great uſe in human life to make ſuch inferences, and if there were not a real foundation for it in the nature of things. This writer himſelf owns, that "none but a "fool or a madman will ever pretend to diſpute "the authority of experience, or to reject that "great guide of human life: But he thinks "it may be allowed a philoſopher to have ſo "much curioſity as to examine the principle "of human nature, which gives this weighty "authority to experience *." But I cannot help thinking, that if we were to judge of philoſophy, by the ſpecimen this Gentleman hath given of it in this inſtance, many would be apt to conclude, that there is a great difference, and even oppoſition, between philoſophy and common ſenſe; that what is ſo obvious and apparent to the common ſenſe and reaſon of mankind, that he is a fool and a madman, who doubts of it; yet in philoſophy is not ſo much as probable.

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* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 63. 66.

Another

LETTER I. Another inſtance, in which our author's ſcheme is not very reconcilable to the common ſentiments of mankind, is, that he ſays, that "though we learn, by experience, the frequent *conjunction* of objects, yet we are "unable to comprehend any thing like *connection* between them; and that there appears not in all nature any thing like *connection*, conceivable by us; all events are entirely looſe and ſeparate; one event follows "another; but we never obſerve any tye betwixt them; they ſeem conjoined, but never "connected*." But it is evident, that in many caſes we have a diſtinct idea of conjunction or contiguity, as in a heap of ſand; and of connection, as betwixt cauſe and effect; and the connection in this caſe is not merely in our thoughts, as this gentleman is pleaſed to repreſent it; but this very connection in our thoughts is founded on a connection which we perceive in the things themſelves. They are not connected as cauſe and effect, becauſe we think them ſo; but we perceive them to be connected, becauſe we find they are ſo: Nor is this owing merely to a cuſtom or habit in our minds, but there is in nature a real foundation for it.

Fourthly, Another remark which occurs to me, upon conſidering Mr. *Hume*'s ſcheme, is, that he hath fallen into ſeveral inconſiſtencies and contradictions: And, indeed, it is not to

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 120.

be

be wondered at, that a man who argueth againſt common ſenſe, however ſubtil and ingenious he may otherwiſe be, ſhould alſo be inconſiſtent with himſelf. I have already taken notice of the paſſages in which he repreſenteth experience as uncertain, and that not ſo much as a probable argument can be drawn from it; and yet in his ſixth eſſay, which is concerning *probability*, he ſhews that experience may not only furniſh probable concluſions, but what he calls *proofs*; which he explains to be *ſuch* arguments from experience, as leave no room for doubt or oppoſition *. And he frequently ſpeaks of experience in very high terms, as a certain guide. Again, in ſeveral paſſages above referred to, he expreſly declares, that in making experimental concluſions, there is no place for *reaſoning*; that the inference in this caſe is entirely owing to cuſtom, and the underſtanding has no part in it. And yet he elſewhere owns, that "there "is great ſcope of *reaſoning* in inferences of "this kind from obſervation and experience;" and that not only men greatly ſurpaſs the inferior animals in this way of reaſoning, but that one man very much excels another †: And he declares, that "all our *reaſonings* are founded "on a ſpecies of analogy; where the cauſes "are entirely ſimilar, the analogy is perfect; "and the inference drawn from it is regarded "as certain and concluſive ‡;" though he had

LETTER I.

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 93. † *Ib.* p. 170, 171.
‡ *Ib.* p. 165.

LETTER I. ſaid, that "it is impoſſible that any arguments "from experience can prove ſuch a reſem- "blance"*. Another inconſiſtency, which may be obſerved in Mr. *Hume's* reaſoning on this ſubject is, that though he repreſents the connection betwixt cauſe and effect to be only a connection in our thoughts, not in the things themſelves†; yet he aſſerts, that "there is a "kind of pre-eſtabliſhed harmony between "the courſe of nature, and the ſucceſſion of "our ideas; and though the powers and forces, "by which the former is governed, be wholly "unknown to us, yet our thoughts and concep- "tions have ſtill, we find, gone on in the ſame "train with other works of nature‡." Where he ſeems to ſuppoſe that there is a real connection in the nature of things, to which the connection in our own minds correſpondeth. The general ſtrain of his arguing in ſeveral of his eſſays, ſeems to be deſigned to prove, if it proves any thing, that we cannot be ſure there is any ſuch thing as cauſe or cauſal connection in the univerſe: Yet he ſays, "it is univerſally allowed "that nothing exiſts without a cauſe of its ex- "iſtence; and that chance is a negative word, "and means not any real power which has any- "where a being in nature§." Here he falls into the common way of ſpeaking, that every thing which exiſteth muſt have a cauſe of its exiſtence; otherwiſe we muſt acknowlege the

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 66. † *Ib.* p. 123, 126.
‡ *Ib.* p. 90. § *Ib.* p. 151.

operation

operation of chance. And he obſerves, that "there is no ſuch thing as chance in the "world *." Cauſes therefore muſt be acknowleged, though we cannot explain the manner of their cauſality: And he himſelf, in reckoning up the principles of the connection of our ideas, diſtinctly mentions *reſemblance*, *contiguity*, and *cauſation*; and this laſt he makes to be the moſt common and uſeful of all †. And yet, in the courſe of his reaſoning, he really leaves no place for *cauſation*, diſtinct from *ſimilarity* or *reſemblance*, and *contiguity*. It may be mentioned, as another inſtance of his inconſiſtency, that he frequently makes *power*, and *neceſſary connection*, the ſame thing; and argues, that if there be any connection betwixt cauſe and effect at all, it muſt be a neceſſary one; for that cannot be called a cauſe, that is not neceſſarily connected with the effect ‡. And yet, in his Eſſay on *Liberty* and *Neceſſity*, when ſpeaking of the influence of motives upon the mind, he ſaith, that "as this influence "is *uſually* conjoined with the action, it muſt "be eſteemed a cauſe, and be looked upon as "an inſtance of the neceſſity which we would "eſtabliſh §:" Where he plainly ſuppoſeth, that it is not eſſential to the notion of a cauſe, that it is infallibly and always connected with the effect; but that it is ſufficient, if it be uſually joined with it. And to the ſame purpoſe, he

LETTER I.

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 93. † *Ib.* p. 32, 84.
‡ *Ib.* p. 93, 103, 151. § *Ib.* p. 154.

 ſaith,

LETTER I. ſaith, that "all cauſes are not conjoined to "their uſual effects, with like conſtancy and "uniformity *." Indeed, his whole Eſſay on Liberty and Neceſſity, though ſeemingly built upon the ſcheme he had advanced in his foregoing Eſſays, with relation to cauſe and effect, is really not reconcilable to it. In all his reaſonings in thoſe Eſſays, concerning cauſe and effect, he had argued that there is no ſuch thing as *neceſſary connection*, or indeed any connection at all, betwixt cauſe and effect: And upon this ſcheme, it is idle to talk of a neceſſity either in phyſical or moral cauſes: And yet in his Eſſay on Liberty and Neceſſity, he plainly argues upon the ſuppoſition of a real connection; though he will only call it a conjunction betwixt cauſe and effect: And he all along ſuppoſeth the influence of cauſes, and the power of motives; and that a neceſſity muſt be acknowleged in moral as well as phyſical cauſes. He would have us begin the queſtion concerning Liberty and Neceſſity, not "by examining the faculties of the ſoul, but by examining the operations of body, and of brute unintelligent "matter†:" And with regard to this, he obſerves, that "it is univerſally allowed, that "matter, in all its operations, is actuated by "a neceſſary force; and that every effect is "ſo preciſely determined by the nature and "energy of its cauſe, that no other effect, in "ſuch particular circumſtances, could poſſibly

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 138. † *Ib.* p. 147.

"have

"have reſulted from the operation of its LETTER
"cauſe*". And he expreſly aſſerteth, that I.
"the conjunction betwixt motives and volun-
"tary actions, is as regular and uniform as that
"betwixt the cauſe and effect, in any part of
"nature†." Thus we ſee, that he can acknow-
lege cauſe and effect, and the connection be-
twixt them, when he has a mind to take ad-
vantage of this, for overthrowing the liberty of
human actions. And he concludes that Eſſay,
with taking notice of the objection which
might be raiſed againſt what he had advanced;
viz. that "if voluntary actions be ſubjected to
"the ſame laws of neceſſity with the opera-
"tions of matter, there is a continued chain
"of neceſſary Cauſes, pre-ordained and prede-
"termined, reaching from the original cauſe of
"all, to every ſingle volition of every human
"creature. While we act, we are, at the ſame
"time, acted upon. There is no contingency
"any-where in the univerſe, no indifferency,
"no liberty." This objection he putteth very
ſtrongly ‡; and yet I cannot ſee, that, accord-
ing to the hypotheſis he had advanced in the
foregoing Eſſays, there can be any juſt foun-
dation for it: For if there be only a mere con-
junction of events, but no cauſal influence, it
cannot be ſaid, that whilſt we act we are acted
upon. On the contrary, nothing is acted upon,
nor is there any power, force, or energy in

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 131, 132. † *Ib.* p. 141.
‡ *Ib.* p. 157, 158.

LETTER I.

nature. All events are looſe, ſeparate, and unconnected, and only follow one another, without connection; and therefore there can be no continued chain of neceſſary cauſes at all. This would be the proper anſwer, according to the principles he had laid down, if he had thought thoſe principles would bear. But he hath not thought fit to make uſe of it; but, in contradiction to his own ſcheme, ſeems here to admit a chain of neceſſary cauſes, phyſical and moral, in order to load providence; and plainly repreſents the objection as unanſwerable *.

Thus I have conſidered, pretty largely, our author's extraordinary ſcheme; and the obſervations that have been made, may help us to judge of this gentleman's character as a writer, whether it deſerveth all the admiration and applauſe, which he himſelf, as well as others, have been willing to beſtow upon it. We may ſee, by what hath been obſerved, how far he hath anſwered what he had prepared the reader to expect, *clearneſs* and *preciſion*, in his way of treating theſe *curious and ſublime ſubjects*. He had particularly propoſed, with regard to power, force, energy, "to fix, if poſſible, the preciſe "meaning of thoſe terms; and thereby re"move part of that obſcurity, which is ſo "much complained of in this ſpecies of phi"loſophy †."

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 162. † *Ib.* p. 101, 102.

What

What Mr. *Hume* hath offered, concerning cauſe and effect, puts me in mind of a remarkable paſſage in Lord *Bolingbroke*'s poſthumous works, which I ſhall mention on this occaſion. LETTER I.

" Whatever knowlege (ſaith his Lordſhip) " we acquire of apparent cauſes, we can ac- " quire none of real cauſality, or that power, " that virtue, whatever it be, by which one " being acts on another, and becomes a cauſe. " We may call this by different names, accord- " ing to the different effects of it; but to " know it in its firſt principles, to know the " nature of it, would be to know as God him- " ſelf knows; and therefore this will be al- " ways unknown to us, in cauſes that ſeem to " be moſt under our inſpection, as well as in " others that are the moſt remote from it." And he repreſents thoſe " philoſophers as ridi- " culous, who, when they have diſcovered a " real actual cauſe, in its effects, by the phæno- " mena, reject it becauſe they cannot con- " ceive its cauſality, nor aſſign a ſufficient rea- " ſon why and how it is*." This may ſeem to bear hard upon Mr. *Hume:* But what is more to be wondered at, he hath in effect paſſed a cenſure upon himſelf. He indeed gives a high encomium on ſceptical philoſophy, in the beginning of his ſixth Eſſay; that " every " paſſion is mortified by it, but the love of " truth; and that paſſion never is, nor can be " carried to too high a degree. It is ſurpriſing

* Lord Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 541.

LETTER I.

" therefore, that this philoſophy, which, in " almoſt every inſtance, muſt be harmleſs and " innocent, ſhould be the ſubject of ſo much " groundleſs reproach and obloquy*." But afterwards, in his twelfth Eſſay, which is of the academical, or ſceptical philoſophy, he gives no advantageous notion of ſcepticiſm. He ſays, that " the grand ſcope of all the enquiries and " diſputes of the ſceptics, is to deſtroy reaſon " by ratiocination and argument†." And ſpeaking of the ſceptical objections againſt the relation of cauſe and effect, he ſaith, that " while " the Sceptic inſiſts upon theſe topics, he ſeems, " for the time at leaſt, to deſtroy all aſſurance " and conviction:" And then he adds, that theſe arguments " might be diſplayed at a " greater length, if any durable good or be- " nefit to ſociety could ever be expected to " reſult from them. For (ſaith he) here is the " chief, and moſt confounding objection, to " exceſſive ſcepticiſm, that no durable good " can ever be expected from it, while it remains " in its full force and vigour‡." And he had ſaid, that " nature will always maintain her " rights, and prevaileth in the end, over any " abſtract reaſoning whatſoever§."

But it were well, if the worſt thing that could be ſaid of our author's exceſſive ſcepticiſm, were, that it is trifling and uſeleſs. It will ſoon

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 70. † *Ib.* p. 245. ‡ *Ib.* p. 251. § *Ib.* p. 71.

appear, that as he hath managed it, it is of a pernicious tendency. But you will probably be of opinion, that enough hath been ſaid of this gentleman, and his oddities, for the preſent. LETTER I.

I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER II.

LETTER II.

Obſervations on Mr. Hume's eſſay concerning a particular providence and a future ſtate. His attempt to ſhew that we cannot juſtly argue from the courſe of nature to a particular intelligent cauſe, becauſe the ſubject lies entirely beyond the reach of human experience, and becauſe God is a ſingular cauſe, and the univerſe a ſingular effect, and therefore we cannot argue by a compariſon with any other cauſe, or any other effect. His argument examined, whereby he pretends to prove, that ſince we know God only by the effects in the works of nature, we can judge of his proceedings no farther than we now ſee of them, and therefore cannot infer any rewards or puniſhments beyond what is already known by experience and obſervation. The uſefulneſs of believing future retributions acknowledged by Mr. Hume, *and that the contrary doctrine is inconſiſtent with good policy.*

SIR,

IT appears from what was obſerved in my former letter, that few writers have carried ſcepticiſm in philoſophy to a greater height than

than Mr. Hume. I now proceed to conſider those things in his writings that ſeem to be more directly and immediately deſigned againſt religion. Some part of what he calls his PHILOSOPHICAL ESSAYS *concerning Human Underſtanding*, manifeſtly tends to ſubvert the very foundations of natural religion, or its moſt important principles. Another part of them is particularly level'd againſt the proofs and evidences of the chriſtian revelation. LETTER II.

The former is what I ſhall firſt conſider, and ſhall therefore examine the eleventh of thoſe eſſays, the title of which is, *concerning a particular providence and a future ſtate.* Mr. Hume introduces what he offers in this eſſay as ſceptical paradoxes advanced by a friend, and pretends by no means to approve of them. He propoſes ſome objections as from himſelf, to his friend's way of arguing; but takes care to do it in ſuch a manner, as to give his friend a ſuperiority in the argument. And ſome of the worſt parts of this eſſay are directly propoſed in his own perſon. The eſſay may be conſidered as conſiſting of two parts. The one ſeems to be deſigned againſt the exiſtence of God, or of one ſupreme intelligent cauſe of the univerſe: The other, which appears to be the main intention of the eſſay, is particularly level'd againſt the doctrine of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments.

LETTER II.

I ſhall begin with the former, becauſe it comes firſt in order to be conſidered, though it is not particularly mentioned till towards the concluſion of the eſſay. He obſerves in the perſon of his Epicurean friend, that "while we argue from the courſe of nature, "and infer a particular intelligent cauſe, which "at firſt beſtowed, and ſtill preſerves order "in the univerſe, we embrace a principle "which is both uncertain and uſeleſs. The "reaſon he gives why it is uncertain is, be-"cauſe the ſubject lies entirely beyond the "reach of human experience*." This is a ſpecimen of the uſe our author would make of the principles he had laid down in the preceding eſſays. He had repreſented Experience as the only foundation of our knowledge with reſpect to matters of fact, and the exiſtence of objects: that it is by experience alone that we know the relation of cauſe and effect; and he had alſo aſſerted, that not ſo much as as a probable argument can be drawn from experience to lay a foundation for our reaſoning from cauſe to effect, or from effect to cauſe. I ſhall not add any thing here to what was offered in my former letter to ſhew the abſurdity, the confuſion, and inconſiſtency of theſe principles. I ſhall only obſerve, that this very writer, who had repreſented all arguments drawn from experience, with relation to cauſe and effect, as abſolutely uncertain,

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 224.

yet

yet makes it an objection againſt the argument from the courſe of nature to an intelligent cauſe, that *the ſubject lies entirely beyond the reach of human experience.* What is the meaning of this is not eaſy to apprehend. It will be readily allowed, that we do not know by experience the whole courſe of nature; yet enough of it falls within the reach even of human obſervation and experience, to lay a reaſonable foundation for inferring from it a ſupreme intelligent cauſe. In that part of the univerſe which cometh under our notice and obſervation, we may behold ſuch illuſtrious characters of wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, as determine us by the moſt natural way of reaſoning in the world, to acknowledge a moſt wiſe, and powerful, and benign author and cauſe of the univerſe. The inference is not beyond the reach of our faculties, but is one of the moſt obvious that offereth to the human mind. But perhaps what the author intends by obſerving that *this ſubject lies entirely beyond the reach of human experience*, is this, That notwithſtanding the admirable marks of wiſdom and deſign which we behold in the courſe of nature, and order of things, we cannot argue from thence to prove a wiſe and intelligent cauſe of the univerſe, or that there was any wiſdom employed in the formation of it, becauſe neither we, nor any of the human race, were preſent at the making of it, or ſaw how it was made.

LETTER II.

This

LETTER II. This muſt be owned to be a very extraordinary way of reaſoning, and I believe you will eaſily excuſe me if I do not attempt a confutation of it.

Mr. Hume, after having argued thus in the perſon of his Epicurean friend, comes in the concluſion of this eſſay to propoſe another argument as from himſelf. "I much doubt, "ſaith he, whether it be poſſible for a cauſe "to be known only by its effect, or to be "of ſo ſingular and particular a nature as to "have no parallel, and no ſimilarity with "any other cauſe or object, that has ever "fallen under our obſervation. 'Tis only "when two ſpecies of objects are found to "be conſtantly conjoin'd, that we can infer "the one from the other. And were an "effect preſented which was entirely ſingular, "and could not be comprehended under any "known ſpecies, I do not ſee that we could "form any conjecture or inference at all con-"cerning its cauſe. If experience, and ob-"ſervation, and analogy be, indeed, the only "guides we can reaſonably follow in infe-"rences of this nature: Both the effect and "cauſe muſt bear a ſimilarity and reſemblance "to other effects and cauſes which we know, "and which we have found in many inſtances "to be conjoin'd with each other*." Mr. *Hume* leaves it to his friend's reflections to *proſecute the conſequences of this Principle,*

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 232, 233.

which

which he had hinted before, might lead *into Reaſonings of too nice and delicate a nature* to be inſiſted on. The argument, as he hath managed it, is indeed ſufficiently obſcure and perplexed. But the general intention of it ſeems to be this, that all our arguings from cauſe to effect, or from effect to cauſe proceed upon analogy, or the comparing ſimilar cauſes with ſimilar effects. Where therefore there is ſuppoſed to be a ſingular cauſe to which there is no parallel (though he much doubts whether there can be a cauſe of ſo ſingular a nature) and a ſingular effect, there can be no arguing from the one to the other: Becauſe in that caſe we cannot argue by a compariſon with any other cauſe, or any other effect. Except therefore we can find another world to compare this with, and an intelligent cauſe of that world, we cannot argue from the effects in this preſent world to an intelligent cauſe: *i. e.* We cannot be ſure there is one God, except we can prove there is one other God at leaſt; or that this world was formed and produced by a wiſe intelligent cauſe, unleſs we know of another world like this, which was alſo formed by a wiſe intelligent cauſe, and perhaps, not then neither: For he ſeems to inſiſt upon it, that there ſhould be *many inſtances* of ſuch cauſes and effects being *conjoined with each other*, in order to lay a proper foundation for *obſervation*, *experience*, and *analogy*, *the only* LETTER II.

LETTER II.

guides we can reaſonably follow in inferences of this nature. He immediately after obſerves, that "according to the antagoniſts of *Epicurus*, "the univerſe, an effect quite ſingular and "unparallel'd, is always ſuppoſed to be the "proof of a Deity, a cauſe no leſs ſingular "and unparallel'd." If by calling the univerſe a ſingular and unparallel'd effect, he intends to ſignify that no other univerſe has come under our obſervation, it is very true: But it by no means follows, that we cannot argue from the evident marks of wiſdom and deſign which we may obſerve in this univerſe that we do know, becauſe we do not know any thing of any other univerſe. This grand univerſal ſyſtem, and even that ſmall part of it that we are more particularly acquainted with, comprehendeth ſuch an amazing variety of phenomena, all which exhibit the moſt inconteſtable proofs of admirable wiſdom, power, and diffuſive goodneſs, ſo that one would think it ſcarce poſſible for a reaſonable mind to reſiſt the evidence. But ſuch is this ſubtil metaphyſical gentleman's way of arguing in a matter of the higheſt conſequence, the abſurdity of which is obvious to any man of plain underſtanding. It is of a piece with what he had advanced before, that there is no ſuch thing as cauſe or effect at all, nor can any probable inference be drawn from the one to the other, than which, as hath been already ſhewn, nothing can be more inconſiſtent

fiſtent with common ſenſe, and the reaſon of all mankind. LETTER II.

The other thing obſervable in this eſſay, and which ſeems to be the principal intention of it, relateth to the proof of a Providence and a Future State. He introduces his friend as putting himſelf in the place of *Epicurus*, and making an harangue to the people of *Athens*, to prove that the principles of his philoſophy were as innocent and ſalutary as thoſe of any other philoſophers. The courſe of his reaſoning or declamation is this. That "the chief or ſole argument "brought by philoſophers for a divine Exiſt-"ence is derived from the order of nature; "where there appear ſuch marks of intelli-"gence and deſign, that they think it extra-"vagant to aſſign for its cauſe, either chance, "or the blind unguided force of matter. That "this is an argument drawn from effects to "cauſes; and that when we infer any par-"ticular cauſe from an effect, we muſt pro-"portion the one to the other, and can never "be allowed to aſcribe to the cauſe any "qualities, but what are exactly ſufficient to "produce the effect. And if we aſcribe to "it farther qualities, or affirm it capable of "producing any other effect, we only indulge "the licence of conjecture without reaſon "or authority." § That therefore "allow-"ing God to be the author of the exiſtence

§ Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 215.

LETTER II. " or order of the Univerſe, it follows, that he " poſſeſſes that preciſe degree of power, intelli- " gence, and benevolence, which appears in his " workmanſhip, but nothing farther can ever be " proved." † Thoſe therefore are vain rea- " ſoners, and reverſe the order of nature, who " inſtead of regarding this preſent life, and " the preſent ſcene of things as the ſole " object of their contemplation, render it a " paſſage to ſomething farther. The Divinity " may indeed poſſibly poſſeſs attributes, which " we have never ſeen exerted, and may be go- " verned by principles of action, which we can- " not diſcover to be ſatisfied: But we can never " have reaſon to infer any attributes, or any " principles of action in him, but ſo far as " we know them to be exerted or ſatisfied." He asks, " are there any marks of diſtributive " juſtice in the world"? And if it be ſaid, that " the juſtice of God exerts itſelf in part, " but not in its full extent," he anſwers, " that " we have no reaſon to give it any particular " extent, but only ſo far as we ſee it at preſent " exert itſelf. ‡" That " indeed, when we " find that any work has proceeded from the " skill and induſtry of man, who is a being " whom we know by experience, and whoſe " nature we are acquainted with, we can draw " a hundred inferences concerning what may " be expected from him, and theſe inferences " will all be founded on experience and ob-

† Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 220. ‡ *Ib.* p. 203.

" ſervation

"ſervation. But ſince the Deity is known to us only by his productions, and is a ſingle being in the Univerſe, not comprehended under any ſpecies or genus, from whoſe experienced attributes or qualities we can by analogy infer any attribute or quality in him, we can only infer ſuch attributes or perfections, and ſuch a degree of thoſe attributes, as is preciſely adapted to the effect we examine. But farther attributes or farther degrees of thoſe attributes, we can never be authorized to infer or ſuppoſe by any rules of juſt reaſoning." He adds, that "the great ſource of our miſtakes on this ſubject is this. We tacitly conſider ourſelves as in the place of the Supreme Being, and conclude, that he will on every occaſion obſerve the ſame conduct, which we ourſelves in his ſituation would have embraced as reaſonable and eligible. Whereas it muſt evidently appear contrary to all rules of analogy to reaſon from the intentions and projects of men to thoſe of a Being ſo different, and ſo much ſuperior—ſo remote and incomprehenſible, who bears leſs analogy to any other being in the univerſe, than the ſun to a waxen taper." He concludes therefore, "that no new fact can ever be infer'd from the religious Hypotheſis: no reward or puniſhment expected or dreaded beyond what is already known by" LETTER II.

LETTER II.

" practice and obſervation *." This is a faithful extract of the argument in this eſſay, drawn together as cloſely as I could, without the repetitions with which it aboundeth.

I ſhall now make a few remarks upon it.

The whole of his reaſoning depends upon this maxim, that when once we have traced an effect up to its cauſe, we can never aſcribe any thing to the cauſe but what is preciſely proportioned to the effect, and what we ourſelves diſcern to be ſo: nor can we infer any thing farther concerning the cauſe, than what the effect, or the preſent appearance of it neceſſarily leads to. He had to the ſame purpoſe obſerved in a former eſſay; that " it " is allowed by all philoſophers, that the " effect is the meaſure of the power." ‡ But this is far from being univerſally true. For we in many inſtances clearly perceive, that a cauſe can produce an effect which it doth not actually produce, or a greater effect than it hath actually produced. This gentleman's whole reaſoning proceeds upon confounding neceſſary and free cauſes; and indeed he ſeems not willing to allow any diſtinction between them, or that there are any other but neceſſary and material cauſes §. A neceſſary cauſe acts up to the utmoſt of its power, and therefore the effect muſt be exactly proportioned to it. But the caſe is manifeſtly different as

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 230, 231. ‡ *Ib.* p. 125.
§ *Ib.* p. 131, 132, 141, 151.

to

to free and voluntary cauſes. They may have a power of producing effects, which they do not actually produce. And as they act from diſcernment and choice, we may, in many caſes, reaſonably aſcribe to them farther views than what we diſcern or diſcover in their preſent courſe of action. This author himſelf owns, that this may be reaſonably done with reſpect to man whom we know by experience, and whoſe nature and conduct we are acquainted with; but denies that the ſame way of arguing will hold with reſpect to the Deity. But ſurely when once we come from the conſideration of his works to the knowledge of a ſelf-exiſtent and abſolutely perfect Being, we may from the nature of that ſelf-exiſtence and abſolutely perfect cauſe reaſonably conclude, that He is able to produce certain effects beyond what actually come under our preſent notice and obſervation, and indeed that He can do whatſoever doth not imply a contradiction. This Univerſe is a vaſt, a glorious, and amazing ſyſtem, comprehending an infinite variety of parts. And it is but a ſmall part of it that comes under our own more immediate notice. But we know enough to be convinced, that it demonſtrateth a wiſdom as well as power beyond all imagination great and wonderful. And we may juſtly conclude the ſame concerning thoſe parts of the Univerſe that we are not acquainted with. And for any man to ſay, that we cannot reaſonably aſcribe any degree of wiſdom or power to God but what is exactly proportioned

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tioned to that part of the univerſal frame which comes under our own particular obſervation, is a very ſtrange way of arguing. The proofs of the wiſdom and power of God, as appearing in our part of the ſyſtem, are ſo ſtriking, that it is hard to conceive, how any man that is not under the influence of the moſt obſtinate prejudice, can refuſe to ſubmit to their force. And yet there are many phænomena, the reaſons and ends of which we are not at preſent able to aſſign. The proper conduct in ſuch a caſe, is to believe there are moſt wiſe reaſons for theſe things, though we do not now diſcern thoſe reaſons, and to argue from the unconteſted characters of wiſdom in things that we do know, that this moſt wiſe and powerful agent, the author of nature, hath alſo acted with admirable wiſdom in thoſe things, the deſigns and ends of which we do not know. It would be wrong therefore to confine the meaſures of his wiſdom preciſely to what appeareth to our narrow apprehenſions in that part of his works, which falleth under our immediate inſpection. This was the great fault of the *Epicureans*, and other atheiſtical philoſophers, who judging by their own narrow views, urged ſeveral things as proofs of the want of wiſdom and contrivance, which upon a fuller knowledge of the works of nature, furniſh farther convincing proofs of the wiſdom of the great Former of all things.

In

In like manner with reſpect to his goodneſs, there are numberleſs things in this preſent conſtitution, which lead us to regard him as a moſt benign and benevolent Being. And therefore it is highly reaſonable, that when we meet with any phænomena, which we cannot reconcile with our ideas of the divine goodneſs, we ſhould conclude, that it is only for want of having the whole of things before us, and conſidering them in their connexion and harmony, that they appear to us with a diſorderly aſpect. And it is very juſt in ſuch a caſe to make uſe of any reaſonable hypotheſis, which tendeth to ſet the goodneſs of God in a fair and conſiſtent light. LETTER II.

The ſame way of reaſoning holds with regard to the juſtice and righteouſneſs of God as the great Governor of the world. We may reaſonably conclude from the intimate ſenſe we have of the excellency of ſuch a character, and the great evil and deformity of injuſtice and unrighteouſneſs, which ſenſe is implanted in us by the author of our beings, and from the natural rewards of virtue, and puniſhment of vice even in the preſent conſtitution of things; that he is a lover of righteouſneſs and virtue, and an enemy to vice and wickedneſs. Our author himſelf makes his *Epicurean* friend acknowledge, that in the preſent order of things, virtue is attended with more peace of mind, and with many other

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advantages above vice. * And yet it cannot be denied, that there are many inſtances obvious to common obſervation, in which vice ſeemeth to flouriſh and proſper, and virtue to be expoſed to great evils and calamities. What is to be concluded from this? Is it that becauſe the juſtice of God here ſheweth itſelf only *in part*, and not *in its full extent* (to uſe our author's expreſſion) therefore righteouſneſs as in God is imperfect in its degree, and that he doth not poſſeſs it in the full extent of that perfection, nor will ever exert it any farther than we ſee him exert it in this preſent ſtate? This were an unreaſonable concluſion concerning a being of ſuch admirable perfection, whoſe righteouſneſs as well as wiſdom muſt be ſuppoſed to be infinitely ſuperior to ours. It is natural therefore to think that this preſent life is only a part of the divine ſcheme, which ſhall be compleated in a future ſtate.

But he urgeth, that the great ſource of our miſtakes on this ſubject is, that "we tacitly "conſider ourſelves as in the place of the ſu-"preme Being, and conclude that he will on "every occaſion obſerve the ſame conduct, "which we ourſelves in his ſituation would "have embraced as reaſonable and eligible. "Whereas it muſt evidently appear contrary to "all rules of analogy, to reaſon from the inten-"tions and purpoſes of men to thoſe of a Being "ſo different and ſo much ſuperior, ſo re-

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 221.

"mote

" mere and incomprehenſible †." But though it were the higheſt abſurdity to pretend to tie down the infinite incomprehenſible Being to our ſcanty model, and meaſures of acting, and to aſſume that he will *on every occaſion*, for ſo our author is pleaſed to put the caſe, obſerve the ſame conduct that we ſhould judge eligible: ſince there may be innumerable things concerning which we are unable to form any proper judgment, for want of having the ſame comprehenſive view of things that he hath: yet on the other hand, there are ſome caſes ſo manifeſt that we may ſafely pronounce concerning them, as worthy or unworthy of the divine perfections. And as our own natures are the work of God, we may reaſonably argue from the traces of excellencies in ourſelves to the infinitely ſuperior perfections in the great Author of the Univerſe, ſtill taking care to remove all thoſe limitations and defects with which thoſe qualities are attended in us. Since therefore we cannot poſſibly help regarding goodneſs and benevolence, juſtice and righteouſneſs, as neceſſary ingredients in a worthy and excellent character, and as among the nobleſt excellencies of an intellectual Being, we are unavoidably led to conclude, that they are to be found in the higheſt poſſible degree of eminency in the abſolutely perfect Being, the Author and Governor of the world. Theſe are not mere arbitrary ſuppoſitions, but are evidently founded in nature and reaſon.

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† Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 230.

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And though in many particular instances we through the narrowneſs of our views cannot be proper judges of the grounds and reaſons of the divine adminiſtrations, yet in general we have reaſon to conclude, that if there be ſuch a thing as goodneſs and righteouſneſs in God, or any perfection in him correſpondent to what is called goodneſs and righteouſneſs in us, he will order it ſo that in the final iſſue of things a remarkable difference ſhall be made between the righteous and the wicked: that at one time or other, and taking in the whole of exiſtence, virtue, though now for a time it may be greatly afflicted and oppreſſed, ſhall meet with its due reward; and vice and wickedneſs, though now it may ſeem to proſper and triumph, ſhall receive its proper puniſhment. Since therefore, by the obſervation of all ages, it hath often happened, that in the preſent courſe of human affairs, good and excellent perſons have been unhappy, and expoſed to many evils and ſufferings; and bad and vicious men have been in very proſperous circumſtances, and have had a large affluence of all worldly enjoyments even to the end of their lives; and that, as this gentleman himſelf elſewhere expreſſeth it, "ſuch is the confuſion and diſorder of human affairs, that no perfect œconomy or regular diſtribution of happineſs or miſery, is in this life ever to be expected ‡." It ſeems reaſonable to conclude, that there ſhall be a future ſtate of exiſtence, in which theſe apparent irregularities ſhall be ſet

‡ Hume's Moral Political Eſſays, p. 244, 245.

right,

right, and there ſhall be a more perfect diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments to men according to their moral conduct. There is nothing in this way of arguing but what is conformable to the ſoundeſt principles of reaſon, and to the natural feelings of the human heart. But though a future ſtate of retributions in general be probable, yet as many doubts might ſtill be apt to ariſe in our minds concerning it, an expreſs revelation from God aſſuring us of it in his name, and more diſtinctly pointing out the nature and certainty of thoſe retributions, would be of the moſt ſignal advantage. LETTER II.

I ſhall have occaſion to reſume this ſubject, when I come to conſider what lord *Bolingbroke* hath more largely offered in relation to it. At preſent it is proper to obſerve that though Mr. *Hume* ſeems to allow his *Epicurean* friend's reaſoning to be juſt, yet he owns, that "in fact men "do not reaſon after that manner; and that they "draw many conſequences from the belief of "a divine exiſtence, and ſuppoſe that the Deity "will inflict puniſhments on vice, and beſtow "rewards on virtue, beyond what appears in the "ordinary courſe of nature. Whether this reaſoning of theirs (adds he) be juſt or not, is no "matter; its influence on their life and conduct "muſt ſtill be the ſame. And thoſe who attempt "to diſabuſe them of ſuch prejudices, may for "aught I know be good reaſoners, but I cannot allow them to be good citizens and politicians: ſince they free men from one reſtraint

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"ment of the laws of equity and ſociety in one
"reſpect more eaſy and ſecure ‖." I think it follows from this by his own account, that he did not act a wiſe or good part, the part of a friend to the public or to mankind, in publiſhing this Eſſay, the manifeſt deſign of which is to perſuade men, that there is no juſt foundation in reaſon for expecting a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments at all. Nor is the conceſſion he here makes very favourable to what he addeth in the next page, concerning the univerſal liberty to be allowed by the ſtate to all kinds of philoſophy. According to his own way of repreſenting it, *Epicurus* muſt have been caſt, if he had pleaded his cauſe before the people; and the principal deſign of this Eſſay, which ſeems to be to ſhew not only the reaſonableneſs, but harmleſſneſs of that philoſophy, is loſt. For if the ſpreading of thoſe principles and reaſonings is contrary to the rules of good policy; and the character of good citizens, if they have a tendency to free them from a ſtrong *reſtraint upon their paſſions*, and to make the *infringement of the laws of equity and ſociety more eaſy and ſecure*; then ſuch principles and reaſonings, according to his way of repreſenting the matter, ought in good policy to be reſtrain'd, as having a bad influence on the community.

There is one paſſage more in this eſſay, which may deſerve ſome notice. It is in page 230,

‖ Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 232.

where

where he obſerves that "God diſcovers himſelf LETTER
"by ſome faint traces or out-lines, beyond II.
"which we have no authority to aſcribe to him
"any attribute or perfection. What we imagine
"to be a ſuperior perfection may really be a
"defect. Or, were it ever ſo much a perfection,
"the aſcribing it to the ſupreme Being, where
"it appears not to have been really exerted to
"the full in his works, ſavours more of flattery
"and panegyric, than of juſt reaſoning and
"ſound philoſophy." The courſe of his arguing ſeems to be this. That it would ſavour of *flattery*, not of *ſound reaſoning*, to aſcribe any attribute or perfection to God, which *appears not to have been exerted to the full in his works*. And he had obſerved before, That "it
"is impoſſible for us to know any thing of the
"cauſe, but what we have antecedently, not in-
"fer'd, but *diſcover'd to the full* in the effect*."
It is plain therefore, that according to him we ought not to aſcribe any perfection to God, but what is not merely *infer'd*, but *diſcover'd to the full* in his works. It is alſo manifeſt, that according to him there is no attribute or perfection of the Deity exerted or diſcovered to the full in his works. For he had ſaid juſt before, that he *diſcovers himſelf only by ſome faint traces or out-lines*. The natural concluſion from theſe premiſes taken together is plainly this, That it would be flattery and preſumption in us to aſcribe any attribute or perfection to God at all. And

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 222.

now

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now I leave it to you to judge of the obligations the world is under to this writer. In one part of this Eſſay he makes an attempt to ſubvert the proof of the exiſtence of God, or a ſupreme intelligent cauſe of the univerſe. And here he inſinuateth, that it would be wrong to aſcribe any perfection or attribute to him at all. And the main deſign of the whole Eſſay is to ſhew, that no argument can be drawn from any of his perfections, to make it probable that there ſhall be rewards and puniſhments in a future ſtate, though he acknowlegeth that it is of great advantage to mankind to believe them.

You will not wonder after this, that this gentleman, who hath endeavoured to ſhake the foundations of natural religion, ſhould uſe his utmoſt efforts to ſubvert the evidences of the chriſtian revelation. What he hath offered this way will be the ſubject of ſome future letters.

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LETTER III.

An examination of Mr. Hume's *Eſſay on Miracles. A ſummary of the firſt part of that Eſſay; which is deſigned to ſhew, that miracles are incapable of being proved by any teſtimony or evidence whatſoever. His main principle examined, that experience is our only guide in reaſoning concerning matters of fact; and that miracles, being contrary to the eſtabliſhed laws of nature, there is an uniform experience againſt the exiſtence of any miracle. It is ſhewn, that no argument can be drawn from experience, to prove that miracles are impoſſible, or that they have not been actually wrought. Miracles not above the power of God, nor unworthy of his wiſdom. Valuable ends may be aſſigned for miracles. They are capable of being proved by proper teſtimony. This applied to the reſurrection of Chriſt. And it is ſhewn, that the evidence repreſented in Scripture is every way ſufficient to ſatisfy us of the truth of it, ſuppoſing that evidence to have been really given as there repreſented.*

SIR,

I Now proceed to conſider Mr. *Hume*'s celebrated Eſſay on Miracles, which is the tenth of his *Philoſophical Eſſays*, and has been mightily

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mightily admired and extoll'd, as a maſterly and unanſwerable piece. I think no impartial man will ſay ſo, that has read the ingenious and judicious anſwer made to it by the Rev. Mr. *Adams*, now Rector of *Shrewsbury*. It is intitled, "An "Eſſay in anſwer to Mr. *Hume*'s Eſſay on Mi-"racles, by *William Adams*, M. A. That which I have by me is the ſecond edition, with additions, *London*, 1754. Beſides this, I have ſeen a ſhort, but excellent diſcourſe, by the Rev. Dr. *Rutherforth*, entitled, "The credibility of "Miracles defended againſt the author of the "Philoſophical Eſſays. In a diſcourſe delivered "at the primary viſitation of the Right Rev. "*Thomas* Lord Biſhop of *Ely*,—*Cambridge*, "1751." Theſe in my opinion are ſufficient. But ſince you deſire that I would alſo take a particular notice of Mr. *Hume*'s Eſſay, I ſhall obey your commands, and enter on a diſtinct conſideration of this boaſted performance.

Mr. *Hume* introduceth his Eſſay on Miracles in a very pompous manner, as might be expected from one who ſets up in his Philoſophical Eſſays, for teaching men better methods of reaſoning, than any Philoſopher had done before him. He had taken care at every turn to let his readers know how much they are obliged to him for throwing new light on the moſt *curious* and *ſublime ſubjects*, with regard to which the moſt celebrated philoſophers had been *extremely defective* in their reſearches. And now he begins his Eſſay on Miracles with declaring That "he "flatters himſelf that he has diſcovered an argu-

" ment, which, if juſt, will, with the wiſe and learned, be an everlaſting check to all kinds of ſuperſtitious deluſion; and conſequently, will be uſeful as long as the world endures. For ſo long, he preſumes, will the account of miracles and prodigies be found in all profane hiſtory *."

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This Eſſay conſiſteth of two parts. The firſt, which reacheth from p. 173 to p. 186, is deſigned to ſhew, that no evidence which can be given, however ſeemingly full and ſtrong, can be a ſufficient ground for believing the truth and exiſtence of miracles: Or, in other words, that miracles are in the nature of things incapable of being proved by any evidence or teſtimony whatſoever. The ſecond part is intended to ſhew, that ſuppoſing a miracle capable of being proved by full and ſufficient evidence or teſtimony, yet in fact there never was a *miraculous event in any hiſtory* eſtabliſhed upon ſuch evidence. The firſt is what he ſeems principally to rely upon. And indeed, if this can be proved, it will make any particular enquiry into the teſtimony produced for miracles, needleſs.

The method he makes uſe of in the firſt part of his Eſſay, to ſhew, that no evidence or teſtimony that can be given is a ſufficient ground for a reaſonable aſſent to the truth and exiſtence of miracles, is this. He lays it down as an undoubted principle: That experience is our only guide in reaſoning concerning matters of fact, and at the ſame time inſinuates, that this guide

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 174.

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is far from being infallible, and is apt to lead us into errors and miſtakes. He obſerves, That the validity and credibility of human teſtimony is wholly founded upon experience: That in judging how far a teſtimony is to be depended upon, we balance the oppoſite circumſtances, which may create any doubt or uncertainty: That the evidence ariſing from teſtimony may be deſtroyed, either by the contrariety and oppoſition of the teſtimony, or by the conſideration of the nature of the facts themſelves: That when the facts partake of the *marvellous* and *extraordinary*, there are two oppoſite experiences with regard to them; and that which is the moſt credible is to be preferred, though ſtill with a diminution of its credibility in proportion to the force of the other which is oppoſed to it: That this holdeth ſtill more ſtrongly in the caſe of miracles, which are ſuppoſed to be contrary to the laws of nature. For experience being our only guide; and an uniform experience having eſtabliſhed thoſe laws, there muſt be an uniform experience againſt the exiſtence of any miracle: And an uniform experience amounts to a full and entire proof. To ſuppoſe therefore any teſtimony to be a proof of a miracle, is to ſuppoſe one full proof for a miracle, oppoſed to another full proof in the nature of the thing againſt it, in which caſe thoſe proofs deſtroy one another. Finally, That we are not to believe any teſtimony concerning a miracle, except the falſhood of that teſtimony ſhould be more miraculous than the miracle itſelf which

it

it is deſigned to eſtabliſh. He alſo gives a hint, that as it is impoſſible for us to know the attributes or actions of God, otherwiſe than from the experience which we have of his productions, we cannot be ſure that he can effect miracles, which are contrary to all our experience, and the eſtabliſhed courſe of nature: And therefore miracles are impoſſible to be proved by any evidence. LETTER III.

Having given this general idea of this firſt part of Mr. *Hume's* Eſſay on Miracles, I ſhall now proceed to a more particular examination of it.

It is manifeſt that the main principle, which lieth at the foundation of his whole ſcheme, is this: That experience is our only "guide in "reaſoning concerning matters of fact *." You will have obſerved, from what hath been remarked in my former letters, that this author brings up the word *experience* upon all occaſions. It is, as he hath managed it, a kind of cant term, propoſed in a looſe indeterminate way, ſo that it is not eaſy to form a clear idea of it, or of what this writer preciſely intends by it. He had declared, that it is only by experience that we come to know the exiſtence of objects: That it is only by experience that we know the relation between cauſe and effect: And at the ſame time had endeavoured to ſhew, that experience cannot furniſh ſo much as even a probable argument concerning any connection betwixt cauſe and effect, or by which we can draw any con-

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 174.

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cluſion from the one to the other. He had afterwards applied the ſame term experience, to ſhew that no argument can be brought to prove the exiſtence of one ſupreme intelligent cauſe of the Univerſe; becauſe this is *a ſubject that lies intirely beyond the reach of human experience*, and that we can have no proof of a future ſtate of retributions, becauſe we know no more concerning providence, than what we learn from experience in this preſent ſtate. And now he comes to try the force of this formidable word againſt the exiſtence of miracles, and to raiſe an argument againſt them from experience.

But that we may not loſe ourſelves in the ambiguity of the term as he employs it, let us diſtinctly examine what ſenſe it bears as applied to the preſent queſtion. In judging of the truth of the maxim he hath laid down, *viz.* that experience is our only guide in reaſoning concerning matters of fact; it is to be conſidered, that the queſtion we are now upon properly relates not to future *events*, as the author ſeems ſometimes to put it *, but to paſt matter of fact. What are we therefore to underſtand by that experience, which he makes to be our only guide in reaſoning concerning them? Is it our own particular perſonal experience, or is it the experience of others as well as our own? And if of others, is it the experience of ſome others only, or of all mankind? If it be underſtood thus, that every man's own perſonal obſervation and experience is

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 175.

to

to be his only guide in reaſoning concerning matters of fact; ſo that no man is to believe any thing with relation to any facts whatſoever, but what is agreeable to what he hath himſelf obſerved or known in the courſe of his own particular experience; this would be very abſurd, and would reduce each man's knowlege of facts into a very narrow compaſs; it would deſtroy the uſe and credit of hiſtory, and of a great part of experimental philoſophy, and bring us into a ſtate of general ignorance and barbariſm. Or, is the word Experience to be taken in a larger and more extenſive ſenſe, as comprehending not merely any particular man's experience, but that of others too? In this caſe we have no way of knowing experience, but by teſtimony. And here the queſtion recurrs; Is it to be underſtood of the experience of all mankind, or of ſome perſons only? If the experience referred to be the experience or obſervation of ſome perſons only, or of a part of mankind, how can this be depended on as a certain guide? For why ſhould their experience be the guide, excluſively of that of others? And how do we know, but that many facts may be agreeable to the experience of others, which are not to theirs? But if the experience referred to be the experience of all mankind in general, that muſt take in the experience both of all men in the preſent age, and of thoſe in paſt times and ages; and it muſt be acknowleged, that this rule and criterion is not eaſily applicable. For will any man ſay, that we are to believe no facts but what are agreeable to the LETTER III.

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experience of mankind in all ages? Are we in order to this, to take in whatſoever any man or men in any age or country have had experience of? And to judge by this, how far it is reaſonable to believe any paſt facts, or facts of which we ourſelves have not had ſenſible evidence? Even on this view of the caſe, it might probably take in many facts of a very extraordinary nature, and which have happened out of the common courſe of things; of which there have been inſtances in the experience and obſervation of different nations and ages. And at this rate experience will not be inconſiſtent with the belief even of miracles themſelves, of which there have been ſeveral inſtances recorded in the hiſtory of mankind.

But farther, in reaſoning from experience, either our own or that of others, concerning matters of fact, it is to be conſidered, what it is that we propoſe to judge or determine by experience in relation to them. Is it whether theſe facts are poſſible, or whether they are probable, or whether they have been actually done? As to the poſſibility of facts, experience indeed, or the obſervation of ſimilar events known to ourſelves or others, may aſſure us that facts or events are poſſible, but not that the contrary is impoſſible. Concerning this, experience cannot decide any thing at all. We cannot conclude any event to be impoſſible, merely becauſe we have had no experience of the like, or becauſe it is contrary to our own obſervation and experience, or

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to the experience of others. For as this gentleman obſerves in another part of his Eſſays, LETTER III.
"The contrary of every matter of fact is ſtill "poſſible; becauſe it can never imply a con-"tradiction *." And again he ſays, ſpeaking of matters of fact, "there are no demonſtra-"tive arguments in the caſe, ſince it implies "no contradiction, that the courſe of nature "may change †." No argument therefore can be brought to demonſtrate any thing or fact to be impoſſible, merely becauſe it is contrary to the courſe of our own obſervation and experience, or that of mankind, provided it doth not imply a contradiction, or provided there be a power capable of effecting it. Another thing to be conſidered, with regard to facts, is whether they are probable: And here experience, or the obſervation of ſimilar events, made by ourſelves or others, may be of great uſe to aſſiſt us in forming a judgment concerning the probability of paſt facts, or in forming conjectures concerning future ones. But if the queſtion be, Whether an event has actually happened, or a fact has been done, concerning this, experience taken from an obſervation of ſimilar events, or the ordinary courſe of cauſes and effects, cannot give us any aſſurance or certainty to proceed upon. We cannot certainly conclude, that any fact or event has been done, merely becauſe we or others have had experience or obſervation of a fact or event of a like nature. Nor on the other

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 48. † *Ib.* 62.

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hand can we conclude, that ſuch a certain event hath not happened, or that ſuch a fact hath not been actually done, becauſe we have not had experience of a like action or event being done, or have had experience of the contrary being done. The rule therefore which he lays down of judging which ſide is ſupported by the greateſt number of experiments, and of balancing the oppoſite experiments, and deducting the leſſer number from the greater, in order to know the exact force of the ſuperior evidence*, is very uncertain and fallacious, if employed in judging whether matters of fact have really been done. For the fact referred to, and the evidence attending it, may be ſo circumſtanced, that tho' it be a fact of a ſingular nature, and to which many inſtances of a different kind may be oppoſed, we may yet have ſuch an aſſurance of its having been actually done, as may reaſonably produce a ſufficient conviction in the mind. The proper way of judging whether a fact or event, of which we ourſelves have not had ſenſible evidence, hath been actually done, is by competent teſtimony. And this in common language is diſtinguiſhed from experience, though this writer artfully confounds them.

This therefore is what we are next to conſider, *viz.* the force of human teſtimony, and how far it is to be depended upon.

And with regard to the validity of the evidence ariſing from human teſtimony, he ob-

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 176.

ſerves, That "there is no ſpecies of reaſoning "more common, more uſeful, and even neceſ- "ſary to human life, than that derived from "the teſtimony of men, and the reports of eye- "witneſſes and ſpectators." The whole certainty or aſſurance ariſing from teſtimony he reſolveth into what he calls *paſt experience*. That "it is derived from no other principle than our "obſervation of the veracity of human teſti- "mony, and of the uſual conformity of facts "to the report of witneſſes." And he mentions as grounds of the belief of human teſtimony, that "men have commonly an inclina- "tion to truth, and a ſentiment of probity; "that they are ſenſible to ſhame when detected "in a falſhood; and that theſe are qualities diſ- "covered by experience to be inherent in hu- "man nature*." But he might have put the caſe much more ſtrongly by obſerving, that human teſtimony, by the acknowlegement of all mankind, may be ſo circumſtanced, as to produce an infallible aſſurance, or an evidence ſo ſtrong, that as our author expreſſeth it in another caſe, none *but a fool or a madman* would doubt of it. It is a little too looſe to ſay in general, that it is *founded only on paſt experience*. It hath its foundation in the very nature of things, in the conſtitution of the world and of mankind, and in the appointment of the Author of our Beings, who it is manifeſt hath formed and deſigned us to be in numberleſs inſtances deter-

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* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 176, 177.

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mined by this evidence, which often comes with ſuch force, that we cannot refuſe our aſſent to it without the greateſt abſurdity, and putting a manifeſt conſtraint upon our nature *. Mr. *Hume* himſelf, in his Eſſay on Liberty and Neceſſity, hath run a parallel between moral and phyſical evidence, and hath endeavoured to ſhew that the one is as much to be depended on as the other. He expreſly ſaith, that "when "we conſider how aptly natural and moral evi- "dence link together, and form only one chain "of argument, we ſhall make no ſcruple to "allow, that they are of the ſame nature, and "derived from the ſame principles †."

It will be eaſily granted, what our author here obſerves, That "there are a number of circum- "ſtances to be taken into conſideration in all "judgments of this kind: And that we muſt "balance the oppoſite circumſtances that create "any doubt or uncertainty, and when we diſ- "cover a ſuperiority on any ſide, we incline to "it, but ſtill with a diminution of aſſurance in "proportion to the force of its antagoniſt ‡." Among the particulars, which may diminiſh or deſtroy the force of any argument drawn from human teſtimony, he mentions the contrariety of the evidence, contradictions of witneſſes, their ſuſpicious character, &c. And then proceeds to take notice of "what may be drawn "from the nature of the fact atteſted, ſuppo-

* See concerning this, Ditton on the Reſurrection, Part 2.

† Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 144. ‡ *Ib.* p. 177.

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" ſing it to partake of the extraordinary and the LETTER
" marvellous." He argueth, that "in that caſe III.
" the evidence reſulting from the teſtimony re-
" ceives a diminution greater or leſs in propor-
" tion as the fact is more or leſs unuſual. When
" the fact atteſted is ſuch a one as has ſeldom
" fallen under our obſervation, here is a conteſt
" of two oppoſite experiences, of which the one
" deſtroys the other as far as its force goes;
" and the ſuperior can only operate upon the
" mind by the force which remains." This is a plauſible, but a very fallacious way of reaſoning. A thing may be very unuſual, and yet, if confirmed by proper teſtimony, its being unuſual may not diminiſh its credit, or produce in the mind of a thinking perſon a doubt or ſuſpicion concerning it. Indeed vulgar minds, who judge of every thing by their own narrow notions, and by what they themſelves have ſeen, are often apt to reject and disbelieve a thing, that is not conformable to their own particular cuſtoms or experience. But wiſer men, and thoſe of more enlarged minds judge otherwiſe: and provided a thing comes to them ſufficiently atteſted and confirmed by good evidence, make its being unuſual no objection at all to its credibility. Many uncommon facts, and unuſual phænomena of nature, are believed by the moſt ſagacious philoſophers, and received as true without heſitation upon the teſtimony of perſons who are worthy of credit, without following the author's rules; or making their own want

LETTER III. of experience or obſervation an objection againſt thoſe accounts. And upon this dependeth no ſmall part of our knowlege. Mr. *Adams* hath very well illuſtrated this by ſeveral inſtances, and hath juſtly obſerved, That the moſt uniform experience is ſometimes outweighed by a ſingle teſtimony; becauſe experience in this caſe is only a negative evidence, and the ſlighteſt poſitive teſtimony is for the moſt part an over-ballance to the ſtrongeſt negative evidence that can be produced *.

Our author here very improperly talks of a *conteſt between two oppoſite experiences*, the one of which deſtroys the other. For when I believe a thing unuſual, I do not believe a thing oppoſite to mine own experience, but different from it, or a thing of which I have had no experience; though if it were a thing contrary to my own experience, provided it were confirmed by ſufficient teſtimony, this is not a valid argument againſt its truth, nor a ſufficient reaſon for disbelieving it. This gentleman himſelf hath mentioned a remarkable inſtance of this kind in the *Indian* Prince, who refuſed to believe the *firſt relations concerning the effects of froſt*. This inſtance, though he laboureth the point here, and in an additional note at the end of his book, is not at all favourable to his ſcheme. He acknowlegeth, that in this caſe of freezing, the event follows *contrary to the rules of analogy, and is* SUCH AS A RATIONAL INDIAN

* Adams's Eſſay, in anſwer to Hume on Miracles, p. 19, 20.

would

would not look for. The conſtant experience in thoſe countries, according to which the waters are always fluid, and never in a ſtate of hardneſs and ſolidity, is againſt freezing. This according to his way of reaſoning might be regarded as a *proof* drawn from conſtant experience, and the uniform courſe of nature, as far as they knew it. Here then is an inſtance, in which it is reaſonable for men to believe upon good evidence an event no way conformable to their experience, and contrary to the rule of analogy, which yet he ſeems to make the only rule by which we are to judge of the credibility and truth of facts. LETTER III.

From the conſideration of facts that are unuſual, he proceeds to thoſe that are miraculous, which is what he hath principally in view. And with regard to theſe he endeavoureth to ſhew that no teſtimony at all is to be admitted. "Let us ſuppoſe, ſaith he, that the fact which they affirm, inſtead of being only marvellous, is really miraculous; and ſuppoſe alſo that the teſtimony conſidered apart, and in itſelf, amounts to an entire proof; in that caſe, there is proof againſt proof, of which the ſtrongeſt muſt prevail, but ſtill with a diminution of its force in proportion to that of its antagoniſt *." It may be proper to remark here, that this writer had in a former Eſſay defined a proof to be *ſuch an argument drawn from experience as leaves no room for doubt or oppoſition* †. Admitting

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 180. † *Ib.* p. 93.

this

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this definition, it is improper and abſurd for him to talk of *proof againſt proof.* For ſince a proof, according to his own account of it, leaves no room for doubt or oppoſition; where there is a proper proof of a fact, there cannot be a proper proof at the ſame time againſt it: For one truth cannot contradict another truth. And no doubt his intention is to ſignify that there can be no proof given of a miracle at all, and that the proof is only on the other ſide. For as he there adds, "A miracle is a violation of the laws of "nature, and as a firm and unalterable expe- "rience hath eſtabliſhed thoſe laws" [he ſhould have ſaid, hath diſcovered to us that theſe are the eſtabliſhed laws, *i.e.* that this is the ordinary courſe of nature] "the proof againſt a miracle "from the very nature of the fact is as entire "as any argument from experience can poſſibly "be imagined." He repeats this again afterward, and obſerves, that "there muſt be an uni- "form experience againſt every miraculous "event, otherwiſe the event would not merit "the appellation; and as an uniform expe- "rience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct "and full proof from the nature of the fact, "againſt the exiſtence of any miracle*." He ſeems to have a very high opinion of the force of this way of reaſoning, and therefore takes care to put his reader again in mind of it in the latter part of his Eſſay. "'Tis experience alone, "ſaith he, which gives authority to human te-

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 181.

"ſtimony;

" ſtimony; and 'tis the ſame experience that LETTER
" aſſures us of the laws of nature. When there- III.
" fore theſe two kinds of experience are con-
" trary, we have nothing to do, but to ſubſtract
" the one from the other—And this ſubſtraction
" with regard to all popular religions amounts
" to an entire annihilation *." And it is chiefly upon this that he foundeth the arrogant cenſure, which, with an unparallelled aſſurance, he paſſeth upon all that believe the Chriſtian religion, *viz.* That "whoſoever is moved by faith
" to aſſent to it, is conſcious of a continued
" miracle in his own perſon, which ſubverts all
" the principles of his underſtanding, and gives
" him a determination to believe whatever is
" moſt contrary to cuſtom and experience." It is thus that he concludes his Eſſay, as if he had for ever ſilenc'd all the advocates for Chriſtianity, and they muſt henceforth either renounce their faith, or ſubmit to paſs with men of his ſuperior underſtanding for perſons miraculouſly ſtupid, and utterly loſt to all reaſon and common ſenſe.

Let us therefore examine what there is in this argument, that can ſupport ſuch a peculiar ſtrain of confidence; and I believe it will appear, that never was there weaker reaſoning ſet off with ſo much pomp and parade.

There is one general obſervation that may be ſufficiently obvious to any man, who brings with him common ſenſe and attention, and which is alone ſufficient to ſhew the fallacy of this

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 202, 203.

boaſted

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boaſted argument. And it is this. That the proof ariſing from experience, on which he layeth ſo mighty a ſtreſs, amounteth to no more than this, that we learn from it what is conformable to the ordinary courſe and order of things, but we cannot learn or pronounce from experience that it is impoſſible things, or events, ſhould happen in any particular inſtance contrary to that courſe. We cannot therefore pronounce ſuch an event, though it be contrary to the uſual courſe of things, to be impoſſible, in which caſe no teſtimony whatſoever could prove it. And if it be poſſible, there is place for teſtimony. And this teſtimony may be ſo ſtrong, and ſo circumſtanced, as to make it reaſonable for us to believe it. And if we have ſufficient evidence to convince us that ſuch an event hath actually happened, however extraordinary or miraculous, no argument drawn from experience can prove that it hath not happened. I would obſerve by the way, that when this gentleman talks of an *uniform experience*, and *a firm and unalterable experience* againſt the exiſtence of all miracles, if he means by it, ſuch an univerſal experience of all mankind, as hath never been counteracted in any ſingle inſtance, this is plainly ſuppoſing the very thing in queſtion; and which he hath no right to ſuppoſe, becauſe, by his own acknowlegement, mankind have believed in all ages that miracles have been really wrought. By uniform experience therefore in this argument muſt be underſtood the general or ordinary experience.

perience of mankind in the uſual courſe of things. And it is ſo far from being true, as he confidently affirms, that ſuch an uniform experience amounts to a *full* and direct *proof* from the nature of the fact againſt the exiſtence of any miracle, that it is no proof againſt it at all. Let us judge of this by his own definition of a miracle. "A miracle, ſaith he, may be accurately "defined, a tranſgreſſion of a law of nature by "a particular volition of the Deity, or by the "interpoſal of ſome inviſible agent." Now our uniform experience affordeth a full and direct proof, that ſuch or ſuch an event is agreeable to the eſtabliſhed laws of nature, or to the uſual courſe of things, but it yieldeth no proof at all, that there cannot in any particular inſtance happen any event contrary to that uſual courſe of things, or to what we have hitherto experienced; or that ſuch an event may not be brought about by a particular volition of the Deity, as our author expreſſeth it, for valuable ends worthy of his wiſdom and goodneſs. LETTER III.

He cannot therefore make his argument properly bear, except he can prove, that miracles are abſolutely impoſſible. And this is what he ſometimes ſeems willing to attempt. Thus ſpeaking of ſome miracles pretended to have been fully atteſted, he asks, "What have we to op-"poſe to ſuch a cloud of witneſſes, but the ab-"ſolute impoſſibility, or miraculous nature of "the event*?" Where he ſeems to make the

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 195.

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miraculous nature of an event, and the *abſolute impoſſibility* of it, to be the ſame thing. And he elſewhere makes an attempt to prove, that we have no reaſon to think, that God himſelf can effect a miracle. He urges, that "though the "Being, to whom the miracle is aſcribed, be "in this caſe Almighty, it does not, upon that "account, become a whit more probable; ſince "'tis impoſſible for us to know the attributes "or actions of ſuch a Being, otherwiſe than "from the experience we have of his pro-"ductions, in the uſual courſe of nature*." But when once we conclude from the effects in the works of nature, that he is Almighty, as this gentleman ſeems here to grant, we may from his being Almighty, reaſonably infer, that he can do many things, which we do not know that he hath actually done, and can produce many effects, which he hath not actually produced. For an Almighty Being can do any thing that doth not imply a contradiction. And it can never be proved, that a miracle, or an event contrary to the uſual courſe of nature, implieth a contradiction. This writer himſelf expreſly acknowlegeth, in a paſſage I cited before, that "it implies no contradiction, that the courſe of "nature may change†." And he repeats it again afterwards, that "the courſe of nature may "change ‡." And as to the extraordinarineſs "of any fact, he ſaith, that "even in the moſt

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 95. † *Ib.* p. 62.
‡ *Ib.* p. 66.

"familiar

" familiar events, the energy of the cauſe is LETTER III.
" as unintelligible, as in the moſt extraordinary
" and unuſual*." What we call the courſe of nature is the appointment of God, and the continuance of it dependeth upon his power and will. It is no more difficult to him, to act contrary to it in any particular inſtance than to act according to it. The one is in itſelf as eaſy to Almighty Power as the other. The true queſtion then is concerning the divine will, whether it can be ſuppoſed, that God, having eſtabliſhed the courſe of nature, will ever permit or order a deviation from that regular courſe, which his own wiſdom hath eſtabliſhed. And with regard to this, it will be readily granted, that it is highly proper and wiſely appointed, that in the ordinary ſtate of things, what are commonly called the laws of nature ſhould be maintained, and that things ſhould generally go on in a fixed ſtated courſe and order; without which there could be no regular ſtudy or knowlege of nature, no uſe or advantage of experience, either for the acquiſition of ſcience, or the conduct of life. But though it is manifeſtly proper, that theſe laws, or this courſe of things, ſhould generally take place, it would be an inexcuſable preſumption to affirm, that God, having eſtabliſhed theſe laws, and this courſe of nature in the beginning, hath bound himſelf never to act otherwiſe than according to thoſe laws. There may be very good reaſons worthy of his great wiſdom

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays. p. 114.

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for his acting ſometimes contrary to the uſual order of things. Nor can it in that caſe be juſtly pretended, that this would be contrary to the immutability of God, which is *Spinoſa*'s great argument againſt miracles: For thoſe very variations, which appear ſo extraordinary to us, are comprehended within the general plan of his providence, and make a part of his original deſign. The ſame infinite wiſdom, which appointed or eſtabliſhed thoſe natural laws, did alſo appoint the deviations from them, or that they ſhould be over-ruled on ſome particular occaſions; which occaſions were alſo perfectly foreſeen from the beginning by his all-comprehending mind. If things were always to go on without the leaſt variation in the ſtated courſe, men might be apt to overlook or queſtion a moſt wiſe governing providence, and to aſcribe things (as ſome have done) to a fixed immutable fate or blind neceſſity, which they call nature. It may therefore be becoming the wiſdom of God, to appoint that there ſhould be, on particular occaſions, deviations from the uſual eſtabliſhed courſe of things. Such extraordinary operations and appearances may tend to awaken in mankind a ſenſe of a Supreme Diſpoſer and Governor of the world, who is a moſt wiſe and free as well as powerful Agent, and hath an abſolute dominion over nature; and may alſo anſwer important ends and purpoſes of moral government, for diſplaying God's juſtice and mercy, but eſpecially for giving atteſtation to the divine miſ-

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ſion of perſons, whom he ſeeth fit to ſend on extraordinary errands for inſtructing and reforming mankind, and for bringing diſcoveries of the higheſt importance to direct men to true religion and happineſs. LETTER III.

It appeareth then that no argument can be brought from experience to prove, either that miracles are impoſſible to the power of God, or that they can never be agreeable to his will. And therefore it is far from yielding a direct and full proof againſt the exiſtence of miracles. It may illuſtrate this to conſider ſome of the inſtances he himſelf mentions. "Lead cannot of itſelf "remain ſuſpended in the air: Fire conſumes "wood, and is extinguiſhed by water." Our uniform experience proves, that this is the uſual and ordinary courſe of things, and agreeable to the known laws of nature: It proves, that lead cannot naturally and ordinarily, or by its own force, be ſuſpended in the air; but it affordeth no proof at all, that it cannot be thus ſuſpended in a particular inſtance by the will of God, or by a ſupernatural force or power. In like manner our experience proves, that fire conſumes wood in the natural courſe of things, but it yieldeth no proof that in a particular inſtance the force of the fire may not be ſuſpended or over-ruled, and the wood preſerved from being conſumed by the interpoſal of an inviſible agent. Another inſtance he mentions is, that "it is a "miracle that a dead man ſhould come to life: "Becauſe that has never been obſerved in any

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" age or country *." But its never having been obſerved, if that had been the caſe, would have furniſhed no proof at all that a dead man cannot be raiſed to life by the power and will of God, when a moſt valuable and important end is to be anſwered by it. And if we have good evidence to convince us, that a man had been really dead, and that man was afterwards really reſtored to life (and this is a matter of fact of which our ſenſes can judge, as well as of any other fact whatſoever) no argument can be drawn from experience to prove, that it could not be ſo. Our experience would indeed afford a proof, that no merely natural human power could effect it; or that it is a thing really miraculous, and contrary to the uſual courſe of nature: But it would not amount to a full and direct proof, or indeed to any proof at all, that it could not be effected by the divine power.

And now we may judge of the propriety of the inference he draws from the argument as he had managed it. " The plain conſequence is," ſaith he, " and 'tis a general maxim worthy " of our attention, that no teſtimony is ſuf- " ficient to eſtabliſh a miracle, unleſs the teſti- " mony be of ſuch a kind, that its falſhood " would be more miraculous than the fact which " it endeavours to eſtabliſh. And even in that " caſe, there is a mutual deſtruction of argu- " ments, and the ſuperiority only gives us an " aſſurance ſuitable to that degree of force,

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 181.

" which

" which remains after deducting the inferior. LETTER
" When any one tells me, that he ſaw a dead III.
" man reſtored to life, I immediately conſult
" with myſelf whether it be more probable, that
" this perſon ſhould either deceive or be de-
" ceived, or that the fact he relates ſhould really
" have happened: I weigh the one miracle
" againſt the other, and according to the ſupe-
" riority which I diſcover, I pronounce my
" deciſion, and always reject the greater mi-
" racle *."

You cannot but obſerve here, this writer's jingle upon the word miracle. As he had talked of proof againſt proof, ſo he here talks as if in the caſe he is ſuppoſing there were miracle againſt miracle; or as if the queſtion were concerning two extraordinary miraculous facts, the one of which is oppoſed to the other. But whereas in that caſe one ſhould think the greater miracle ought to take place againſt the leſſer, this gentleman, with whom miracle and abſurdity is the ſame thing, declares that he always *rejects the greater miracle*. But to quit this poor jingle, it is allowed that the raiſing a dead man to life, muſt, if ever it happened, have been a very ſignal miracle; *i. e.* as he defines it, a violation of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity. The queſtion therefore is, Whether any evidence is given, which may be depended on, to aſſure us, that however ſtrange or extraordinary this event may be; yet it hath

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 182.

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actually happened. That the thing itſelf is poſſible to the Deity, however it be contrary to the uſual courſe of nature, cannot be reaſonably conteſted: Becauſe it cannot be proved to involve a contradiction, or any thing beyond the reach of almighty power. For it would be to the laſt degree abſurd to ſay, that he who formed this ſtupendous ſyſtem, or who contrived and fabricated the wonderful frame of the human body, and originally gave it a principle of life, could not raiſe a dead man to life. It would be a contradiction, that the ſame man ſhould be living and dead at the ſame time, but not that he that was dead ſhould afterwards be reſtored to life. And therefore if it be the will of God, and his wiſdom and goodneſs ſeeth it proper for anſwering any very important purpoſes, he is able to effect it. But then whether he hath actually effected it, is another queſtion. And here it will be readily owned, that in a caſe of ſo extraordinary a nature, the evidence or teſtimony upon which we receive it, ought to be very ſtrong and cogent.

Mr. *Hume* is pleaſed here to put the caſe in a very looſe and general way. "When any "one tells me (ſaith he) that he ſaw a dead "man reſtored to life, I immediately conſider "with myſelf, whether it be more probable, "that this perſon ſhould either deceive or be "deceived, or that the fact he relates ſhould "really have happened." He puts it, as if there was nothing to depend upon but the teſtimony of

of a ſingle perſon, without any aſſignable reaſon for ſo extraordinary an event. And when thus propoſed, naked of all circumſtances, no wonder that it hath an odd appearance. But that we may bring the queſtion to a fair iſſue, let us apply it to what our author without doubt had principally in his view, the reſurrection of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Taking the caſe therefore according to the repreſentation given of it in the holy Scriptures, let us examine whether, ſuppoſing all thoſe circumſtances to concur which are there exhibited, they do not amount to a full and ſatisfactory evidence, ſufficient to lay a juſt foundation for a reaſonable aſſent to it. Let us then ſuppoſe, that in a ſeries of writings, publiſhed by different perſons in different ages, and all of them unconteſtably written long before the event happened, a glorious and wonderful Perſon was foretold, and deſcribed by the moſt extraordinary characters, who ſhould be ſent from heaven to teach and inſtruct mankind, to guide them in the way of ſalvation, and to introduce an excellent diſpenſation of truth and righteouſneſs: That not only the nation and family from which he was to ſpring, the place of his birth, and time of his appearing, was diſtinctly pointed out, but it was foretold that he ſhould endure the moſt grievous ſufferings and death, and that afterwards he ſhould be exalted to a divine dominion and glory, and that the Gentiles ſhould be enlightned by his doctrine, and receive his law: That accordingly, at the time

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time which had been ſignified in thoſe predictions, that admirable perſon appeared: That he taught a moſt pure and heavenly doctrine, preſcribed the moſt holy and excellent laws, and brought the moſt perfect ſcheme of religion which had ever been publiſhed to the world; and at the ſame time exhibited in his own ſacred life and practice an example of the moſt conſummate holineſs and goodneſs: That in proof of his divine miſſion he performed the moſt wonderful works, manifeſtly tranſcending the utmoſt efforts of all human power or skill, and this in a vaſt number of inſtances, and in the moſt open and public manner, for a courſe of years together: That he moſt clearly and expreſly foretold, that he was to undergo the moſt grievous ſufferings, and a cruel and ignominious death, and ſhould afterwards riſe again from the dead on the third day: And to this he appealed as the moſt convincing proof of his divine miſſion: That accordingly he ſuffered the death of the croſs in the face of a vaſt multitude of ſpectators: And notwithſtanding the chief men of the *Jewiſh* nation, by whoſe inſtigation he was crucified, took the moſt prudent and effectual precautions to prevent an impoſition in this matter, he roſe again from the dead at the time appointed with circumſtances of great glory, in a manner which ſtruck terror into the guards, who were ſet to watch the ſepulchre: That afterwards he ſhewed himſelf alive to many of thoſe who were moſt intimately acquainted with him, and who,

far from diſcovering a too forward credulity, could not be brought to believe it, till they found themſelves conſtrained to do ſo by the teſtimony of all their ſenſes: That as a farther proof of his reſurrection and exaltation, they who witneſſed it were themſelves enabled to perform the moſt wonderful miracles in his name, and by power derived from him, and were endued with the moſt extraordinary gifts and powers, that they might ſpread his religion through the world, amidſt the greateſt oppoſitions and diſcouragements: That accordingly this religion, though propagated by the ſeemingly meaneſt and moſt unlikely inſtruments, and not only deſtitute of all worldly advantages, but directly oppoſite to the prevailing ſuperſtitions, prejudices and vices both of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, and though it expoſed its publiſhers and followers to all manner of reproaches, perſecutions and ſufferings, yet in that very age made the moſt ſurpriſing progreſs, in conſequence of which the religion of Jeſus was eſtabliſhed in a conſiderable part of the world, and ſo continueth unto this day. Such is the view of the evidence of the reſurrection of Jeſus. And taking it altogether, it forms ſuch a concatenation of proofs, as is every way ſuitable to the importance of the fact, and which was never equal'd in any other caſe. And to ſuppoſe all this evidence, to have been given in atteſtation to a falſhood, involveth in it the moſt palpable abſurdities. It is to ſuppoſe, either that God would employ his own preſcience

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preſcience and power to give teſtimony to an impoſtor, by a ſeries of the moſt illuſtrious prophecies, and numerous uncontrouled miracles: Or that good Beings ſuperior to man would extraordinarily interpoſe for the ſame purpoſe, to countenance and derive credit to a perſon falſly pretending to be ſent from God, and feigning to act in his name: Or, that evil ſpirits would uſe all their arts and power to atteſt and confirm a religion, the manifeſt tendency of which was to deſtroy idolatry, ſuperſtition and vice, where-ever it was ſincerely believed and embraced, and to recover mankind to holineſs and happineſs; which is a contradiction to their very nature and character: It is to ſuppoſe that a number of perſons would combine in atteſting falſhoods in favour of a perſon who they knew had deceived them, and of a religion contrary to their moſt inveterate and favourite prejudices, and by which they had a proſpect of gaining nothing but miſery, reproach, ſufferings, and death; which is abſolutely contrary to all the principles and paſſions of the human nature: It is to ſuppoſe that perſons of the greateſt ſimplicity and plainneſs would act the part of the vileſt impoſtors: Or, that men who were ſo bad, ſo falſe, and impious, as to be capable of carrying on a ſeries of the moſt ſolemn impoſitions in the name of God himſelf, would at the hazard of all that is dear to men, and in manifeſt oppoſition to all their worldly intereſts, endeavour

endeavour to bring over the nations to embrace a holy and ſelf-denying inſtitution: Or, that if they were enthuſiaſts, who were carried away by the heat of their own diſtempered brains to imagine, that for a ſeries of years together the moſt extraordinary facts were done before their eyes, though no ſuch things were done at all, and that they were themſelves enabled actually to perform the moſt wonderful works in the moſt open and public manner, though they performed no ſuch works; it is to ſuppoſe that ſuch mad enthuſiaſts, who were alſo mean and contemptible in their condition, and for the moſt part ignorant and illiterate, were not only capable of forming the nobleſt ſcheme of religion which was ever publiſhed to mankind, but were able to overcome all the learning, wealth, power, eloquence of the world, all the bigotry, and ſuperſtition of the nations, all the influence and artifices of the prieſts, all the power and authority of the magiſtrates: That they did this by only alleging they had a commiſſion in the name of a perſon who had been crucified, whom they affirmed, but without giving any proof of it, to have been riſen from the dead, and to be exalted as the Saviour and Lord of mankind. All this is ſuch a complication of abſurdities, as cannot be admitted but upon principles that are abſolutely abhorrent to the common ſenſe and reaſon of men. It were eaſy to enlarge farther on this ſubject, but this may ſuffice at preſent; eſpecially

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eſpecially conſidering that Mr. *Adams* hath urged many things to this purpoſe with great clearneſs and force, in his anſwer to Mr. *Hume*'s Eſſay, p. 31-36. And what is there to oppoſe to all this? Nothing but the ſingle difficulty of reſtoring a dead man to life, which is indeed a very extraordinary and miraculous event, but is not above the power of God to effect, and ſuppoſing a good and valid reaſon can be aſſigned for it worthy of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs, involveth in it no abſurdity at all. And ſuch a reaſon it certainly was to give an illuſtrious atteſtation to the divine miſſion of the Holy Jeſus, and to the divine original of the moſt excellent diſpenſation of religion that was ever publiſhed among men. To talk, as this author does, of the diminution of the evidence in proportion to the difficulty of the caſe is trifling. For the evidence is here ſuppoſed to be fully proportioned to the difficulty and importance of the caſe: Since both there is a power aſſigned every way able to effect it, and a valuable end which makes it reaſonable to think it was becoming the divine wiſdom and goodneſs to interpoſe for effecting it.

You will perhaps think this may be ſufficient with regard to the firſt part of Mr. *Hume*'s Eſſay on Miracles. In my next I ſhall endeavour to make it appear, that we have the higheſt reaſon to think that the evidence, which hath been argued to be ſufficient if given, was really and actually

actually given: And ſhall anſwer the ſeveral conſiderations he hath offered to ſhew that ſuppoſing miracles capable of being proved by evidence or teſtimony, yet no evidence was ever actually given for miracles, which can be reaſonably depended upon.

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Reflections on the ſecond part of Mr. Hume's *Eſſay on Miracles, which is deſigned to ſhew, that in fact there never was a miraculous event eſtabliſhed upon ſuch evidence as can be depended on. What he offers concerning the neceſſary conditions and qualifications of witneſſes in the caſe of miracles conſidered. It is ſhewn that the witneſſes to the miracles in proof of Chriſtianity had all the conditions and qualifications, that can be required to render any teſtimony good and valid. Concerning the proneneſs of mankind in all ages to believe wonders, eſpecially in matters of religion. This no reaſon for rejecting all miracles without farther examination. The miracles wrought in proof of Chriſtianity not done in an ignorant and barbarous age. His pretence that different miracles wrought in favour of different religions deſtroy one another, and ſhew that none of them are true. The abſurdity of this way of reaſoning ſhewn. Inſtances produced by him of miracles well atteſted, and which yet ought to be rejected as falſe and incredible. A particular examination of what he hath offered concerning the miracles attributed to the Abbé de Paris, and which he pretends much ſurpaſs thoſe of our Saviour in credit and authority.*

SIR,

I Now proceed to conſider the ſecond part of Mr. *Hume's* Eſſay on Miracles. The firſt was

was deſigned to ſhew, that miracles are incapable of being proved by any evidence whatſoever, and that no evidence or teſtimony that could be given, let us ſuppoſe it never ſo full and ſtrong, would be a ſufficient ground for believing the truth and exiſtence of miracles. And now in his ſecond part he proceeds to ſhew, that ſuppoſeing a miracle capable of being proved by full and ſufficient evidence or teſtimony, yet in fact there never was a *miraculous event* in any hiſtory eſtabliſhed upon ſuch evidence as can reaſonably be depended upon. To this purpoſe he offereth ſeveral conſiderations. The firſt is deſigned to prove, that no witneſſes have ever been produced for any miracle, which have all the neceſſary conditions and qualifications, to render their teſtimony credible. The ſecond conſideration is drawn from the pronenes there has been in mankind in all ages to believe wonders; and the more for their being abſurd and incredible; eſpecially in matters of religion; and that therefore in this caſe all men of ſenſe ſhould reject them without farther examination. His third obſervation is, that they are always found to abound moſt among ignorant and barbarous nations. His fourth obſervation is drawn from the oppoſite miracles wrought in different religions, which deſtroy one another; ſo that there is no miracle wrought, but what is oppoſed by an infinite number of others. He then goes on to give an account of ſome miraculous facts which ſeem to be well atteſted, and yet are to

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be rejected as falſe and incredible. This is the ſubſtance of this part of his Eſſay, which he concludes with an inſolent boaſt as if he thought he had ſo clearly demonſtrated what he undertook, that no man who had not his *underſtanding* miraculouſly *ſubverted* could oppoſe it. But I apprehend, it will appear upon a diſtinct examination of what he hath offered, that there is little ground for ſuch confident boaſting.

The principal conſideration is that which he hath mentioned in the firſt place, drawn from the want of competent teſtimony to aſcertain the truth of miraculous facts. He affirms, "That "there is not to be found in all hiſtory any "miracle atteſted by a ſufficient number of men, "of ſuch unqueſtionable good ſenſe, education, "and learning, as to ſecure us againſt all delu- "ſion in themſelves; of ſuch undoubted inte- "grity, as to place them beyond all ſuſpicion of "any deſign to deceive others; of ſuch credit "and reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to "have a great deal to loſe in caſe of being de- "tected in any falſhood; and at the ſame time "atteſting facts perform'd in ſuch a public man- "ner, and in ſo celebrated a part of the world, "as to render the detection unavoidable: All "which circumſtances are requiſite to give us a "full aſſurance in the teſtimony of men *."

Here he ſuppoſes, that where theſe circumſtances concur, we may have *full aſſurance in the teſtimony of men* concerning the facts they relate,

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 183.

however

however extraordinary and unuſual. Let us therefore examine the conditions and qualifications he inſiſts upon as neceſſary to render a teſtimony good and valid, and apply them to the teſtimony of the witneſſes of Chriſtianity, and the extraordinary miraculous facts whereby it was confirmed, eſpecially that of our Saviour's Reſurrection. LETTER IV.

The firſt thing he inſiſteth upon is, that the Miracle ſhould be *atteſted by a ſufficient number of men.* He hath not told us, what number of witneſſes he takes to be ſufficient in ſuch a caſe. In ſome caſes very few may be ſufficient. Yea, a ſingle evidence may be ſo circumſtanced as to produce a ſufficient aſſurance and conviction in the mind, even concerning a Fact of an extraordinary nature: though where there is a concurrence of many good witneſſes, it is undoubtedly an advantage, and tendeth to give farther force to the evidence. And as to this, Chriſtianity hath all the advantages that can reaſonably be deſired. All the Apoſtles were the authorized witneſſes of the principal facts by which Chriſtianity is atteſted. So were the ſeventy Diſciples, and the hundred and twenty mentioned *Acts* i. 15, 21, 22. who had been with Jeſus from the commencement of his perſonal miniſtry to his aſcenſion into heaven: to which might be added many others who had ſeen his illuſtrious miracles, as well as heard his excellent inſtructions. The accounts of theſe things were publiſhed in that very age, and the Facts were repreſented as

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having been done, and the Diſcourſes as having been delivered, in the preſence of multitudes; ſo that in effect they appealed to thouſands in *Judea*, *Jeruſalem*, and *Galilee*. It is true, that as to the Reſurrection of Chriſt, this was not a Fact done before all the people†; but there was a number of witneſſes to it, ſufficient to atteſt any fact. Chriſt ſhewed himſelf alive after his paſſion to ſeveral perſons at different times; whoſe teſtimony gave mutual ſupport and force to one another. He ſhewed himſelf alſo to all the Apoſtles in a body, to ſeveral other diſciples, and at laſt to five hundred at once‡. To which it may be added, that all the extraordinary facts and wonderful works wrought by the Apoſtles and firſt publiſhers of Chriſtianity, many of which were of a very public nature, and done in the view of multitudes, came in aid of their teſtimony.

As to the qualifications of the witneſſes, the firſt thing he requireth is, that "they ſhould be "of ſuch unqueſtioned good ſenſe, education "and learning, as to ſecure us againſt all deluſion "in themſelves." The reaſon why this gentleman here mentioneth *learning* and *education*, as neceſſary qualifications in witneſſes, is evident. It is undoubtedly with a view to exclude the Apoſtles, who, except *St. Paul*, appear not to have been perſons of education and learning. But no

† See this accounted for Vol. I. p. 138, 139, 273, 274.
‡ *Ib.* p. 268.

Court

Court of Judicature, in enquiring into facts, looks upon it to be neceſſary that the perſons giving teſtimony to the truth of thoſe facts ſhould be perſons who had a learned education: It is ſufficient, if they appear to be perſons of ſound ſenſe and honeſt characters, and that the facts were ſuch as they had an opportunity of being well acquainted with. And thus it was with regard to the firſt witneſſes of Chriſtianity. They were not indeed perſons eminent for their learning, knowlege, and experience in the world. If they had been ſo, this might probably have been regarded as a ſuſpicious circumſtance, as if they had themſelves laid the ſcheme, and it was the effect of their own art and contrivance. But they were perſons of plain ſenſe, and ſound underſtanding, and perfectly acquainted with the facts they relate. This ſufficiently appeareth from their writings, and the accounts they have left us. Their narrations are plain and conſiſtent, delivered in a ſimple unaffected ſtile, without any pomp of words, or oſtentation of eloquence or literature on the one hand, and on the other without any of the rants of enthuſiaſm. All is calm, cool, and ſedate, the argument of a compoſed ſpirit. There is nothing that betrayeth an overheated imagination: nor do they ever fly out into paſſionate exclamations, even where the ſubject might ſeem to warrant it. The facts they relate were of ſuch a nature, and ſo circumſtanced, that they could not themſelves be deceived in them, ſuppoſing they had their ſenſes, or be made to believe they LETTER IV.

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were done before their eyes, when they were not done. This muſt be acknowleged as to the facts done during Chriſt's perſonal Miniſtry. For they were conſtantly with him in his going out and coming in, and had an opportunity of obſerving thoſe facts in all their circumſtances for a courſe of years together; and therefore could be as perfectly aſſured of them, as any man can be of any facts whatſoever, which he himſelf hears and ſees. And as to his reſurrection, they were not forward raſhly to give credit to it by an enthuſiaſtic heat. They examined it ſcrupulouſly, and would not receive it, till compelled by irreſiſtible evidence, and by the teſtimony of all their ſenſes.

The next thing he inſiſteth upon is, that "the witneſſes ſhould be of ſuch undoubted in-"tegrity, as to place them beyond all ſuſpicion "of any deſign to deceive others." Apply this to the witneſſes of the miraculous Facts whereby Chriſtianity was atteſted, and it will appear that never were there perſons, who were more remote from all reaſonable ſuſpicion of fraud, or a deſign to impoſe falſhoods upon Mankind. They appeared by their whole temper and conduct to be perſons of great probity, and unaffected ſimplicity, ſtrangers to artful cunning, and the refinements of human policy. It mightily ſtrengthens this, when it is conſidered, that as the caſe was circumſtanced, they could have no temptation to endeavour to impoſe theſe things upon the world if they had not been true, but had

had the ſtrongeſt inducements to the contrary. They could have no proſpect of ſerving their worldly intereſt, or anſwering the ends of ambition, by preaching up a religion contrary to all the prevailing paſſions and prejudices of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, a principal article of which was ſalvation through a crucified Jeſus. They could ſcarce have had a reaſonable expectation of gaining ſo much as a ſingle proſelyte, to ſo abſurd and fooliſh a ſcheme, as it muſt have been, ſuppoſing they had known that all was falſe, and that Jeſus had never riſen at all. How could it have been expected in ſuch a caſe, that they ſhould be able to perſuade the *Jews* to receive for their Meſſiah, one that had been put to an ignominious death by the Heads of their nation, as an impoſtor and deceiver? Or, that they ſhould perſuade the *Gentiles* to acknowlege and worſhip a crucified *Jew* for their Lord, in preference to their long-adored Deities, and to abandon all their darling Superſtitions for a ſtrict and ſelf-denying diſcipline? The only thing that can be pretended as a poſſible inducement to them, to endeavour to impoſe upon mankind, is what this writer afterwards mentions. "What greater temptation, ſaith he, "than to appear a Miſſionary, a Prophet, and "Ambaſſador from heaven? Who would not "encounter many dangers and difficulties, "to attain ſo ſublime a character? Or, if perſuaded of it himſelf, would ſcruple a pious "fraud in proſpect of ſo holy an end*". But

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* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 200.

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there is no room for ſuch a ſuſpicion in the caſe we are now conſidering. If they had pretended a revelation in favour of a Meſſiah, ſuited to the *Jewiſh* carnal notions and prejudices, who was to erect a mighty worldly dominion, arrayed with all the pomp of ſecular glory and grandeur, they might have expected honour and applauſe in being looked upon as his miniſters. But what honour could they propoſe from being regarded as the diſciples and apoſtles of one that had been condemned, and put to a ſhameful death by public authority? To ſet up as his Ambaſſadors, and pretend to be inſpired by his ſpirit and to be commiſſioned by him to go through the world, preaching up Jeſus Chriſt and him crucified: This was in all appearance the readieſt way they could take to expoſe themſelves to general ſcorn, deriſion, and reproach: And they muſt have been abſolutely out of their ſenſes, to have expected that any veneration ſhould be paid to them under this character, ſuppoſing they had no other proof to bring of their crucified Maſter's being riſen, and exalted in glory as the univerſal Lord and Saviour, but their own word. Thus it appears that they could have no inducements or temptations, according to all the principles or motives that equally work upon the human mind, to attempt to impoſe this Scheme of Religion, and the facts by which it was ſupported, if they had known them to be falſe: and if they had been falſe, they muſt have known them to be ſo. But this is not all. They had the ſtrongeſt poſſible

inducements

inducements to the contrary. The Scheme of religion they preached, and which theſe facts were deſigned to atteſt, was directly oppoſite to their own moſt rooted prejudices. On the ſuppoſition of Chriſt's not having riſen, they muſt have been ſenſible that he had deceived them; that the promiſes and predictions with which he had amuſed them were falſe; and that conſequently they could have no hopes from him either in this world or in the next. At the ſame time they could not but foreſee, that by pretending he was riſen from the dead, and ſetting him up for the Meſſiah after he had been crucified, they ſhould incur the indignation of the body of their own nation, and the hatred and contempt of thoſe in chief authority among them. They could not poſſibly expect any thing but what they met with, perſecutions, reproaches, ſhame and ſufferings both from *Jews* and *Gentiles*. Their expoſing themſelves to theſe things may be accounted for, if they were perſuaded that what they witneſſed was really true; though even in that caſe it required great virtue and conſtancy, and divine ſupports. But that they ſhould in manifeſt oppoſition to their own religious prejudices and worldly intereſts, without the leaſt proſpect of any thing to be gained by it here or hereafter, perſiſt to the very death in atteſting a falſhood known by themſelves to be ſo; and that they ſhould, for the ſake of one who they knew had deceived them, expoſe themſelves to the greateſt evils and ſufferings to which all men

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men have naturally the ſtrongeſt averſion, is a ſuppoſition that cannot be admitted with the leaſt appearance of reaſon, as being abſolutely ſubverſive of all the principles and paſſions of human nature. Our author ought to acknowlege the force of this reaſoning, ſince he taketh pains throughout his whole Eſſay on Liberty and Neceſſity, to ſhew that we may in many caſes argue as ſurely and ſtrongly, from the power and influence of motives on the human mind, as from the influence of phyſical cauſes; and that there is as great a certainty, and as neceſſary a connexion in what are called moral cauſes as in phyſical. And he expreſly declareth, that "we "cannot make uſe of a more convincing argu- "ment than to prove, that the actions aſcribed "to any perſon are contrary to the courſe of "nature, and that no human motives in ſuch "circumſtances, could ever induce them to ſuch "a conduct*."

This writer farther requireth, that "the wit- "neſſes ſhould be of ſuch Credit and Reputa- "tion in the eyes of Mankind as to have a "great deal to loſe in caſe of being detected in "any falſhood." If the meaning be, that they muſt be perſons diſtinguiſhed by their rank and ſituation in the world, and of great reputation for knowledge, and for the eminency of their ſtation and figure in life; this in the caſe here referred to would inſtead of ſtrengthening have greatly weakened the force of their teſtimony.

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 135.

It might have been ſaid with ſome ſhew of plauſibility, that ſuch perſons by their knowledge and abilities, their reputation and intereſt, might have it in their power to countenance and propagate an impoſture among the people, and give it ſome credit in the world. If the facts recorded in the goſpel, the miracles and reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt, had been patronized and atteſted by the Chief Prieſts and Rulers of the *Jewiſh* Nation, it would undoubtedly have been pretended that that they had political deſigns in view, and that conſidering their authority and influence they might more eaſily impoſe thoſe things upon the multitude. On this view of things the evidence for thoſe important facts would have been far leſs convincing than now it is. And therefore the Divine wiſdom hath ordered it far better, in appointing that the firſt witneſſes of the Goſpel were not the worldly *wiſe*, *mighty*, or *noble*, but perſons of mean condition, and yet of honeſt characters, without power, authority, or intereſt. And whereas this writer urgeth, that the witneſſes ought to be of *ſuch reputation as to have a great deal to loſe in caſe of being detected in a falſhood*; it ought to be conſidered, that a man of true probity, though in a low condition, may be as unwilling to be branded as a cheat and an impoſtor, and as deſirous to preſerve his good name, which may be almoſt all he has to value himſelf upon, as perſons of greater figure and eminence in the world, who may more eaſily find means to ſupport themſelves, and to evade detection and puniſhment. LETTER IV.

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niſhment. The Apoſtles indeed rejoiced that they were counted *worthy to ſuffer ſhame for the name of Chriſt*, Acts. v. 41. But this was not owing to their being inſenſible to ſhame, but to the teſtimony of a good conſcience, and to the full perſuaſion they had of Chriſt's divine Miſſion, and the divinity of the Religion they preached in his name. This particularly was the principle upon which St. *Paul* acted, who was a man of reputation among the *Jews*, and would never have made a ſacrifice of this, and of all his worldly intereſts and expectations, to join himſelf to a deſpiſed perſecuted party, and againſt whom he himſelf had conceived the ſtrongeſt prejudices, if he had not been brought over by an evidence which he was not able to reſiſt, to the acknowlegement of the Chriſtian faith, and of the extraordinary facts on which it was eſtabliſhed.

The laſt thing he inſiſteth upon is, that the facts atteſted by the witneſſes ſhould be "performed in ſuch a public manner, and in ſo celebrated a part of the world, as to render the "Detection unavoidable." This may be applied with the greateſt propriety to the extraordinary and miraculous Facts by which Chriſtianity was atteſted. Juſtly doth St. *Paul* appeal to king *Agrippa* in the admirable apology he made before him and the *Roman* Governor *Feſtus*, and which was delivered before a numerous and auguſt aſſembly of *Jews* and *Romans*, that *none of theſe things were hidden from him: for*, ſaith he, *this*

this thing was not done in a corner. Act. xxvi. 26. LETTER IV.
Chriſt's whole perſonal Miniſtry, and the wonderful works he wrought, were tranſacted not in a private and ſecret, but in the moſt open and public manner poſſible, in places of the greateſt concourſe, and before multitudes of people aſſembled from all parts. The ſame may be ſaid of many of the miracles wrought by the apoſtles in the name and by the power of a riſen Jeſus. And particularly never was there any event of a more public nature than the extraordinary effuſion of the Holy Ghoſt on the day of Pentecoſt. The firſt publiſhers of Chriſtianity preached the religion of Jeſus, and performed miracles in confirmation of it, not merely in ſmall villages, or obſcure parts of the country, but in populous cities, in thoſe parts of the world that were moſt celebrated for the liberal arts, learning, and politeneſs. They publiſhed that religion, and the wonderful Facts by which it was ſupported, throughout the leſſer *Aſia*, *Greece*, *Italy*; in the cities of *Jeruſalem*, *Antioch*, *Epheſus*, *Corinth*, *Theſſalonica*, *Philippi*, *Athens*, and *Rome* itſelf. If therefore their pretences had been falſe, they could ſcarce have poſſibly eſcaped a detection. Eſpecially conſidering that they were every where under the eye of watchful Adverſaries, unbelieving *Jews* as well as Heathens, who would not have failed to detect and expoſe the impoſture, if there had been any. As to what the author afterwards alledgeth, that "in the infancy of "new religions the wiſe and learned commonly eſteem

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"esteem the matter too inconsiderable to deserve "their attention and regard. And when afterwards they would willingly detect the cheat, in "order to undeceive the deluded multitude, the "season is now gone, and the Records and Witnesses, who might clear up the matter, are "perished beyond recovery *." This pretence hath no place in the case we are now considering with regard to Christianity. That religion met with the greatest opposition even in its infancy. Persons of principal authority in the nation where it first arose, bent their attention and employed their power to suppress it. And in all the places where it was afterwards propagated, there were unbelieving *Jews*, who used their utmost efforts to stir up the Heathens against it, who of themselves were strongly inclined by their own prejudices to oppose it: and this at the very time when if the facts had been false, it would have been the easiest thing in the world, to have detected the falshood; which in that case must have been known to thousands; since many of the facts appealed to were of a very public nature.

Thus I have considered the conditions and qualifications he insisteth upon as necessary to give us a *full assurance in the testimony of men* with regard to miracles; and have shewn, that all the conditions that can be reasonably desired concur with the highest degree of evidence in the Testimony given by the apostles and first witnesses of Christianity, to the extraordinary

* Hume's Philosophical Essays, p. 202.

facts

facts whereby its divine authority was eſtabliſhed. Their Teſtimony had ſome advantages which no other Teſtimony ever had. St. *Luke* obſerves, that *with great power gave the apoſtles witneſs of the Reſurrection of the Lord Jeſus*, Acts. iv. 33. The Teſtimony they gave was accompanied with a Divine power. The force of their Teſtimony did not depend merely on their own veracity, but may be ſaid to have been confirmed by the atteſtation of God himſelf. It is with the utmoſt propriety therefore that the ſacred writer of the epiſtle to the *Hebrews* repreſenteth *God as bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own will*, Hebr. ii. 4. And it is inconteſtibly true in fact, that ſo ſtrong and convincing was the evidence, that great numbers both of *Jews* and *Gentiles* were brought over in that very age to the faith of a crucified and riſen Saviour. Nor was this the effect of a too forward credulity, ſince it was in direct oppoſition to their prejudices, paſſions and worldly intereſts. The Principles and Inducements, which uſually lead men to form wrong and partial judgments, lay wholly on the other ſide, and inſtead of being favourable to Chriſtianity tended rather to determine men to diſbelieve and reject it. So that it may be juſtly ſaid, that the Propagation of that Scheme of religion which is held forth in the Goſpel had ſomething in it ſo wonderful, taking in all the circumſtances of the caſe, that it affordeth a manifeſt and moſt convincing

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I now proceed to make ſome obſervations upon the other Conſiderations this Gentleman offers in this ſecond Part of his Eſſay; and which indeed can at beſt paſs, for no more than Preſumptions; and only ſhew, that the Teſtimony given to Miracles is not raſhly to be admitted, and that great care and caution is neceſſary in judging of them, which will be eaſily allowed.

The ſecond Conſideration, and upon which he ſeemeth to lay a great ſtreſs is this. That "we "may obſerve in human nature a Principle, "which, if ſtrictly examined, will be found to "diminiſh extremely the aſſurance we might "have from human Teſtimony, in any kind of "Prodigy." He ſays, "That though for the "moſt part we readily reject any Fact that is "unuſual and incredible in an ordinary degree, "yet when any thing is affirmed utterly abſurd "and miraculous, the mind rather more readily "admits ſuch a Fact, upon account of that very "circumſtance, which ought to deſtroy all its "authority. The paſſion of *Surprize* and *Wonder* ariſing from Miracles, being an agreeable "Emotion, gives a ſenſible tendency towards "the belief of thoſe Events from which it is de-"rived.—But if the Spirit of Religion join "itſelf to the love of wonder, there is an end of "common Senſe; and human Teſtimony in theſe "circumſtances loſes all pretenſions to autho-"rity

"rity*". And again he obſerves, that "ſhould "a miracle be aſcribed to any new ſyſtem of re- "ligion, men in all ages have been ſo much "impoſed on by the ridiculous ſtories of this "kind, that this very circumſtance will be a "full proof of a cheat, and ſufficient with all "men of ſenſe, not only to make them reject "the fact, but even reject it without farther "examination." And he repeats it again, that it ſhould "make us form a general reſolution "never to lend any attention to it, with what- "ever ſpecious pretext it may be covered†." He here undertakes to anſwer for all *men of ſenſe*, that they will reject all miracles produced in proof of religion without farther examination: because men in all ages have been much impoſed on by ridiculous ſtories of this kind. But this certainly is the language, not of reaſon and good ſenſe, which will diſpoſe a man fairly to examine, but of the moſt obſtinate prepoſſeſſion and prejudice. No kinds of hiſtorical facts, whether of an ordinary or extraordinary nature, can be mentioned, in which men have not been frequently impoſed upon. But this is no juſt reaſon for rejecting ſuch facts at once without examination: and the man that would do ſo, inſtead of proving his ſuperior good ſenſe, would only render himſelf ridiculous. That there have been many falſe miracles will be readily acknowledged; but this doth not prove that there never have been any true ones. It ought indeed to make us very

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 184, 185. † *Ib.* p. 204, 205.

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* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 203.

this,

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this, to give an attestation to the divine mission of persons sent to instruct mankind in religious truths of great importance, and to lead them in the way of salvation. Our author seems sometimes to lay a mighty stress on the general opinion and common *sentiments* of mankind *: And there are few notions, which, by his own acknowlegement, have more generally obtained in all nations and ages, than this, that there have been miracles actually wrought on some occasions, especially in matters of religion, and that they are to be regarded as proofs of a divine interposition. This is a principle which seems to be conformable to the natural sense of the human mind.

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The observation he makes concerning the agreeable *Emotion* produced by the *passion of wonder and surprize*, and the strong propensity *there is in mankind to the extraordinary and the marvellous*, proves nothing against this principle. The passion of wonder and surprize was certainly not given us in vain, but for very wise purposes, and it may be presumed, that this passion, as well as others, may be rightly exercised upon proper objects. But I cannot agree with this gentleman, that men are naturally disposed and inclined to believe a thing the rather for its being *merely absurd and miraculous*, especially in matters of religion. They may, indeed, and often do believe absurdities; but they never believe a thing merely because it is absurd, but be-

* Hume's Essays, Moral and Political, p. 307.

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inſtead

inſtead of producing belief, would rather have turned to its diſadvantage, and could ſcarce have failed being detected in ſuch circumſtances, if they had been falſe. LETTER IV.

His third obſervation is, that it "forms a "very ſtrong preſumption againſt all ſupernatural relations, that they are always found "chiefly to abound among ignorant and barbarous nations; or if a civilized people have "ever given admiſſion to any of them, they "have received them from ignorant and barbarous anceſtors *." But no preſumption can be drawn from this to the prejudice of Chriſtianity, which did not make its firſt appearance in an ignorant and barbarous age, but at a time when the world was greatly civilized, and in nations where arts and learning had made a very great progreſs. And it muſt be conſidered, that it had not only their inveterate prejudices, their darling paſſions, and inclinations, but their pretended miracles to encounter with; extraordinary facts received from their anceſtors, who *tranſmitted them*, as he expreſſeth it, *with that inviolable Sanction and Authority, which always attends antient and received opinions.* How ſtrong and cogent therefore muſt the force of the evidence in behalf of the Chriſtian religion, and the extraordinary miraculous facts deſigned to ſupport it, have been, which in the hands of ſuch mean inſtruments, could make ſo great a progreſs in a civilized and enlightened age, and proved too hard for the religion of the

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 186, 187.

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empire; which beſides its being interwoven with the civil eſtabliſhment, had the preſcription of many ages to plead, and was ſupported by pretended miracles, prodigies and oracles; Mr. *Hume* is pleaſed to take notice on this occaſion of the management of that cunning impoſtor *Alexander* *. But though the better to carry on the cheat, he had laid the ſcene among the barbarous *Paphlagonians*, who were reckoned among the moſt ſtupid and ignorant of the human race; and not only put in practice all the arts of impoſture (though it doth not appear that he pretended to work miracles among the people, or put the proof of his authority upon them) but had procured a powerful intereſt among the great to ſupport him, he and his impoſtures ſoon ſunk into oblivion, and ſo undoubtedly would Chriſtianity too have done, if its extraordinary facts had no better foundation in truth and fact than his pretenſions had.

" I may add (ſaith he) as a fourth reaſon, " which diminiſhes the authority of prodigies, " that there is no teſtimony for any, even thoſe " which have not been expreſsly detected, that " is not oppoſed by an infinite number of " witneſſes; ſo that not only the miracle de- " ſtroys the credit of the teſtimony, but even " the Teſtimony deſtroys itſelf." He goes on to obſerve, that " in matters of religion what- " ever is different is contrary: That it is im- " poſſible that all theſe different religions ſhould

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 188, 189.

"be eſtabliſhed on a ſolid foundation: That "every miracle pretended to have been wrought "in any of theſe religions, as it is deſigned to "eſtabliſh that particular ſyſtem, has the ſame "force to overthrow every other ſyſtem; and "conſequently to deſtroy the credit of thoſe "miracles on which that ſyſtem was eſtabliſhed. "So that all the prodigies of different religions "are to be regarded as contrary facts, and the "evidences of thoſe prodigies as oppoſite to "one another*." This writer is here pleaſed to confound *prodigies* and *miracles*, which ought to be diſtinguiſhed. Many things that have paſſed under the notion of prodigies, are very far from being miracles in the ſtrict and proper ſenſe, in which we are now conſidering them. And if we ſpeak of miracles properly ſo called, the ſuppoſition he here goes upon, *viz.* that all religions have been founded upon miracles, and have put the proof of their authority upon them, is manifeſtly falſe. It is well known, that *Mahomet* did not pretend to eſtabliſh his religion by miracles, nor indeed can it be proved that any ſyſtems of religion had any tolerable pretenſions of being originally founded upon miracles, but the *Jewiſh* and the *Chriſtian*; and theſe, though in ſome reſpects *different*, are not *contrary*, but mutually ſupport each other; the former being introductive and preparatory to the latter. But if his ſuppoſition ſhould be admitted, that all religions in the world have been

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* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 190, 191.

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founded upon the credit of miracles, it is hard to comprehend the force of his reaſoning. By what logic doth it follow, that becauſe miracles have been believed by mankind in all ages and nations to have been wrought in proof of religion, therefore miracles were never really wrought at all in proof of religion, nor are they ever to be believed in any ſingle inſtance? With the ſame force it may be argued that becauſe there have been and are many oppoſite ſchemes of religion in the world, therefore their being oppoſite to one another proves that they are all falſe, and that there is no ſuch thing as true religion in the world at all. But let us ſuppoſe never ſo great a number of falſhoods oppoſed to truth, that oppoſition of falſhood to truth, doth not make truth to be the leſs true, or deſtroy the certainty and evidence of it. Suppoſing the religions to be oppoſite, and that miracles are ſaid to be wrought in atteſtation to thoſe oppoſite religions, it may indeed be fairly concluded that they cannot be all true, but not, that none of them is ſo. Our author himſelf ſeems to be apprehenſive that this might be looked upon as a fallacious way of reaſoning. "This argument (ſaith he) may ap-
"pear very ſubtile and refined; but is not in re-
"ality different from the reaſoning of a Judge,
"who ſuppoſes that the credit of two witneſſes,
"maintaining a crime againſt any one is de-
"ſtroyed by the teſtimony of two others, who
"affirm him to have been two hundred leagues
"diſtant

" diſtant at the ſame inſtant when the crime is LETTER
" ſaid to have been committed *." This gen- IV.
tleman has here given us a moſt extraordinary ſpecimen, how well qualified he would be to determine cauſes, if he ſat in a court of Judicature. If there came ſeveral witneſſes before him, and their teſtimony was oppoſite to one another, he would without farther examination reject them all at once, and make their oppoſition to one another to be alone a proof that they were all falſe, and none of them to be depended upon. But it hath been hitherto thought reaſonable, when teſtimonies are oppoſite, to weigh and compare thoſe teſtimonies, in order to form a proper judgment concerning them. In the caſe of *Alibi's*, which is the caſe the author here puts, the teſtimonies do not always deſtroy one another. A juſt and impartial Judge will not immediately reject the teſtimonies on both ſides without examination, becauſe they contradict one another, which is the method our author ſeems here to recommend as reaſonable, but will carefully compare them, that he may find out on which ſide the truth lies, and which of the teſtimonies is moſt to be credited, and will give his judgment accordingly. This certainly is the courſe which right reaſon preſcribeth in all caſes where there is an oppoſition of teſtimony, and which it is to be preſumed this gentleman himſelf would recommend in every caſe, but where the cauſe of

* Hôme's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 192.

religion

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religion is concerned. For here, notwithſtanding all his pretenſions to freedom of thinking, his prejudices are ſo ſtrong, that he is for proceeding by different weights and meaſures from what he and all mankind would judge reaſonable in every other inſtance. He hath ſhewed himſelf ſo little qualified to judge impartially in matters of this nature, that I believe *men of ſenſe*, to uſe his own phraſe, will lay very little ſtreſs on any judgment he ſhall think fit to pronounce in this cauſe.

The only part of Mr. *Hume*'s Eſſay on Miracles, which now remaineth to be conſidered, is that which relateth to ſome particular accounts of miraculous facts, which he would have us believe are as well or better atteſted, than thoſe recorded in the Goſpels, and yet are to be rejected as falſe and incredible. The firſt inſtance he mentioneth is that of the Emperor *Veſpaſian*'s curing a blind and a lame man at *Alexandria*, and which he affirms is one of the beſt-atteſted miracles in all profane Hiſtory. This has been urged by almoſt every Deiſtical writer who hath treated of Miracles: And how little it is to the purpoſe in the preſent controverſy hath been often ſhewn. Not to repeat what Mr. *Adams* hath well urged concerning it, it may be ſufficient to obſerve, that it appeareth from the accounts given us by the hiſtorians who mention it *, that the deſign of theſe miracles was to give weight to the authority of *Veſpaſian*, newly made Emperor

* Tacit. Hiſt. lib. 4. cap. 8. Sueton. in Veſpaſ. cap. 8.

by

by the great men and the army, and to make it believed that that his elevation to the imperial throne was approved by the gods. I believe every reasonable man will be of opinion, that in any case of this kind there is great ground to suspect artifice and management. And who would be so presumptuous as to make too narrow a scrutiny into the truth of miracles, in which the interests of the Great, and the authority of a mighty Emperor, were so nearly concerned. And if, as this writer observes from *Tacitus*, some who were present continued to relate these facts, even after *Vespasian* and his family were no longer in possession of the empire; it doth not appear, that the persons referred to were such as had been in the secret of the management, which probably lay in few hands; or if they were, it is not to be wonder'd at that they should afterwards be unwilling to own the part they had in this affair; especialy since no methods were made use of to oblige them to discover the fraud. LETTER IV.

The next instance he produceth is the miracle pretended to have been wrought at *Saragossa*, and mentioned by Cardinal *De Retz*, who by *Mr. Hume*'s own account did not believe it. But certainly a man must have his head very oddly turned to attempt to draw a parallel between the miracles of our Saviour and his Apostles, and miracles pretended to have been wrought in a country where the Inquisition is established, where the influence and interests of the Priests, the superstitions and prejudices of the People, and the

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the authority of the civil Magiſtrate, are all combined to ſupport the credit of thoſe miracles, and where it would be extremely dangerous to make a ſtrict enquiry into the truth of them: and even the expreſſing the leaſt doubt concerning them might expoſe a man to the moſt terrible of all evils and ſufferings.

But that which Mr. *Hume* ſeems to lay the greateſt ſtreſs upon, and on which he enlarges for ſome pages together, is, the miracles reported to have been wrought at the tomb of the *Abbé de Paris*. Having obſerved that in the *Recueil des Miracles de l'Abbé de Paris*, there is a parallel run between the miracles of our Saviour, and thoſe of the Abbé, he pronounces, that "if the inſpired writers were "to be conſidered merely as human teſtimony, "the *French* author is very moderate in his "compariſon, ſince he might with ſome appear-"ance of reaſon pretend, that the *Janſeniſt* "miracles much ſurpaſs the others in credit and "authority *."

This has been of late a favourite topic with the Deiſts. Great triumphs have been raiſed upon it, as if it were alone ſufficient to deſtroy the credit of the miraculous facts recorded in the New Teſtament. I ſhall therefore make ſome obſervations upon it, though in doing ſo I ſhall be obliged to take notice of ſeveral things which Mr. *Adams* hath already obſerved in his judicious reflections upon this ſubject, in his anſwer

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 196.

to

to Mr. *Hume*'s Eſſay on Miracles, from page 65, to page 78. LETTER IV.

The account Mr. *Hume* pretends to give of this whole affair is very unfair and diſingenuous, and is abſolutely unworthy of any man that makes pretenſions to a free and impartial enquiry.

He poſitively aſſerts, that the miraculous facts were ſo ſtrongly proved, that the Moliniſts or Jeſuits were never able diſtinctly to refute or detect them: And that they could not deny the truth of the facts, but aſcribed them to witchcraft and the devil. And yet certain it is, that the Jeſuits or Moliniſts did deny many of the facts to be true as the *Janſeniſts* related them; that they aſſerted them to be falſe, and plainly proved ſeveral of them to be ſo. Particularly the Archbiſhop of *Sens* diſtinctly inſiſted upon twenty-two of thoſe pretended miraculous facts, all which he charged as owing to falſhood and impoſture.

He farther obſerves, that twenty-two of the Curez or Rectors of *Paris* preſſed the Archbiſhop of *Paris* to examine thoſe miracles, and aſſerted them to be known to the whole world. But he knew, or might have known, that ſome of thoſe very miracles which thoſe gentlemen deſired might be particularly inquired into, and which they repreſented as undeniably true and certain, were afterwards examined, and the perjury of the principal witneſſes plainly detected *.

* See Mr. Des Voeux's Critique General, p. 242, 243.

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been ſolidly anſwered by Mr. *Des Voeux*, a very ingenious and judicious author, who had himſelf been bred up among the *Janſeniſts*, and was at *Paris* part of the time that this ſcene was carrying on. See his *Lettres ſur les Miracles*, publiſhed in 1735, and his *Critique Generale du livre de Mr. de Montgeron*, in 1741. See alſo what relates to this ſubject in the 19th and 20th Tomes of the *Bibliotheque Raiſonneè*.

There never was perhaps a book written with a greater air of aſſurance and confidence, than that of Mr. *de Montgeron*. He intitles it, *The Truth of the Miracles wrought by the interceſſion of M. de Paris and other Appellants, demonſtrated againſt M. the Archbiſhop of Sens*. It was natural therefore to expect, that he would have attempted to juſtify all thoſe miracles which that prelate had attacked. But of twenty-two which are diſtinctly inſiſted upon by the Archbiſhop, there are ſeventeen which Mr. *de Montgeron* does not meddle with. He hath paſſed by thoſe of them againſt which the ſtrongeſt charges of falſehood and impoſture lay. Five of the miracles attacked by the Archbiſhop, he takes pains to juſtify, to which he has added four more which that Prelate had not diſtinctly conſidered. Mr. *Des Voeux*, who has examined this work of Mr. *de Montgeron* with great care and judgment, hath plainly ſhewn that there are every-where to be diſcovered in it marks of the ſtrongeſt prepoſſeſſion *. Carried away by the power of his pre-

* The character of Mr. de Montgeron is well repreſented by Mr. Adams in his anſwer to Hume, p. 74, 75.

judice;

judices, and by his affection to the *Janſeniſt* cauſe, LETTER IV.
to which he was greatly attached, he has in ſeveral inſtances diſguiſed and miſrepreſented facts in a manner which cannot be excuſed or vindicated. The laſt mentioned author has charged him with faults not merely of inadvertency, but with direct falſifications deſigned to impoſe upon the public. See the ſixth letter of his *Critique Generale*, page 208, et ſeq. Mr. *Hume* has taken care not to give his reader the leaſt hint of any thing of this nature.

The remarks which have been now made may help us to judge of Mr. *Hume*'s conduct in his management of this ſubject.

I ſhall now proceed to make ſome obſervations upon the remarkable differences there are between the miracles recorded in the goſpels, and thoſe aſcribed to the Abbé *de Paris*, by conſidering which it will appear that no argument can be juſtly drawn from the latter to diſcredit the former, or to invalidate the proof produced for them.

I. One obſervation of no ſmall weight is this. At the time when the miracles of the Abbé *de Paris* firſt appeared, there was a ſtrong and numerous party in *France*, and which was under the conduct of very able and learned men, who were ſtrongly prepoſſeſſed in favour of that cauſe which thoſe miracles ſeemed to be intended to ſupport. And it might naturally be expected, that theſe would uſe all their intereſts and influ-

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ence for maintaining and ſpreading the credit of them among the people. And ſo it actually happened. The firſt rumours of theſe miracles were eagerly laid hold on; and they were cried up as real and certain miracles, and as giving a clear deciſion of Heaven on the ſide of the appellants, even before there was any regular proof ſo much as pretended to be given for them *. To which it may be added, that the beginning of this whole affair was at a very promiſing conjuncture, *viz.* when the Cardinal *de Noailles* was archbiſhop of *Paris*; who, whatever may be ſaid of his capacity and integrity, which Mr. *Hume* highly extols, was well known to be greatly inclined to favour the cauſe of the appellants. It was therefore a ſituation of things very favourable to the credit of thoſe miracles, that they firſt appeared under his adminiſtration, and were tried before his officials. And though the ſucceeding archbiſhop was no friend to the *Janſeniſts*, yet when once the credit of thoſe miracles was in ſome meaſure eſtabliſhed, and they had got the popular vogue on their ſide, the affair was more eaſily carried on. But at the firſt appearance of Chriſtianity, the circumſtances of things were entirely different. There were indeed parties among the *Jews*, the moſt powerful of which were the *Phariſees* and the *Saducees*, beſides the prieſts and rulers of the *Jews*, and the Sanhedrim or great council of the nation. But not one of theſe afforded the leaſt counte-

* See Crit. Gen. Lettre vi.

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nance to the first witnesses and publishers of the Christian religion. Our Lord, far from addicting himself to any party, freely declared against what was amiss in every one of them! He opposed the distinguishing tenets of the *Saducees*, the traditions, superstitions, and hypocrisy of the *Pharisees*, and the prejudices of the vulgar. Christianity proceeded upon a principle directly contrary to that in which all parties among the *Jews* were agreed, *viz.* upon the doctrine of a spiritual kingdom, and a suffering Messiah. And accordingly all the different sects and parties, all the powers civil and ecclesiastical, united their interests and endeavours to oppose and suppress it. Whatever suspicion therefore might be entertained with regard to the miracles said to have been wrought at the tomb of the Abbé *de Paris*, which had a strong party from the beginning prepared to receive and support them; no such suspicion can reasonably be admitted as to the truth and reality of the extraordinary facts whereby Christianity was attested, which, as the case was circumstanced, could scarce possibly have made their way in the manner they did, or have escaped detection, if they had not been true.

II. Another consideration, which shews a remarkable difference between the miracles recorded to have been wrought by our Saviour and his apostles, and those ascribed to the Abbé *de Paris*, is this: That the former carry plain characters of a divine interposition, and a supernatural power, and the latter, even taking their own

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account of them, do not appear to be evidently miraculous, they may be accounted for without ſuppoſing any thing properly ſupernatural in the caſe. Our Lord Jeſus Chriſt not only healed all manner of diſeaſes, but he raiſed the dead. He commanded the winds and the ſeas, and they obeyed him: He ſearched the hearts, and knew the thoughts of men: He gave many expreſs and circumſtantial predictions of future contingencies, both relating to his own ſufferings and death, and to his conſequent reſurrection and exaltation, and relating to the calamities that ſhould come upon the *Jews*, the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* and the temple, and the wonderful propagation and eſtabliſhment of his church and kingdom in the world, which it was impoſſible for any man, judging by the rules of human probability, to foreſee. He not only performed the moſt wonderful works himſelf, but he imparted the ſame miraculous powers to his diſciples, and poured forth upon them the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, as he had promiſed and foretold; gifts of the moſt admirable nature, which were never parallel'd before nor ſince, and which were peculiarly fitted for ſpreading and propagating the Chriſtian religion. With regard to theſe and other things which might be mentioned, no man has ever pretended to draw a compariſon between the miracles aſcribed to the Abbé *de Paris*, and thoſe of our Saviour. And accordingly one of the moſt zealous and able advocates for the former, M. *Le Gros* expreſsly acknowlegeth, that

that there is *an infinite difference between them*, LETTER IV.
and declares that he *will never forget that difference*. The only inſtance in which a parallel is pretended to be drawn, is with regard to miraculous cures, which alone conſidered are the moſt uncertain and equivocal of all miracles. Diſeaſes have often been ſurprizingly cured without any thing that can be properly called miraculous in the caſe. Wonderful has been the effect of medicines adminiſtred in certain circumſtances: And ſome maladies, after having long reſiſted all the art and power of remedies, have gone off of themſelves by the force of nature, or by ſome ſurprizing and unexpected turn, in a manner that cannot be diſtinctly explained; yet it may be obſerved, that there were ſeveral circumſtances attending the miraculous cures wrought by our Saviour and his apoſtles, which plainly ſhewed them to be divine. The cures were wrought in an inſtant by a commanding word. The blind, the lame, thoſe that laboured under the moſt obſtinate and inveterate diſeaſes found themſelves immediately reſtored at once with an Almighty facility. If there had been only a few inſtances of this kind, it might poſſibly have been attributed to ſome odd accident, or hidden cauſe, which could not be accounted for. But the inſtances of ſuch complete and inſtantaneous cures wrought by our Saviour were very numerous. They extended to all manner of diſeaſes, and to all perſons without exception who applied to him. Yea, he cured

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ſome that did not apply to him, who did not know him, or who were his enemies, and had no expectation of a cure, in which caſes it could not be pretended that imagination had any ſhare. In all theſe reſpects there was a remarkable difference between the miraculous cures wrought by our Saviour, and thoſe pretended to have been wrought at the tomb of the Abbé *de Paris*. Several of the moſt boaſted cures, and which were pretended to have been ſudden and perfected at once, appear from their own accounts to have been carried on by ſlow degrees, and therefore might have been brought about in a natural way. Some of theſe cures were days, weeks, and even months before they were perfected. One nine days devotion followed another, and they were ſuffered to languiſh and continue praying and ſupplicating for a conſiderable time together; and if the cure happened, and the diſtemper came to a criſis during the courſe of their long attendance, and whilſt they were continuing their devotions, this paſſed for a miraculous cure, though it might well be done without any miracle at all. Eſpecially as ſeveral of thoſe perſons continued to be taking remedies, even whilſt they were attending at the tomb. It is manifeſt from the relations publiſhed by themſelves, that with regard to ſeveral of thoſe who were pretended to be miraculouſly cured, their maladies had already begun to abate, and they had found conſiderable eaſe and relief in a natural way before they came to the tomb at all. And ſome

of

of them ſeem by the force of their imagination to have believed themſelves cured, when they were not ſo, or to have taken a temporary relief for an abſolute cure. Several of the cures, the accounts of which were publiſhed with great pomp, could not with any propriety be ſaid to have been perfected at all; ſince the perſons ſaid to have been cured ſtill continued infirm, and had returns of their former diſorders. This can ſcarce be ſuppoſed, if the cures had been really miraculous, and owing to an extraordinary exertion of the power of God, who would not have left his own work imperfect. See all theſe things fully proved by many inſtances in M. *des Voeux*'s letters *ſur les Miracles*; particularly in the fifth of thoſe letters. LETTER IV.

To all which it may be added, that of the vaſt numbers who came to the tomb to be cured, and who had recourſe to the Abbé's interceſſion, there were but few on whom the cures were wrought, in compariſon of thoſe who found no benefit at all, though they applied to him with the utmoſt devotion, and continued to do ſo for a long time together. And indeed conſidering how many there were that applied for help and cure, and how much they were prepoſſeſſed with the notions countenanced in the *Romiſh* church, of the power of departed Saints, of the prevalency of their interceſſion, and the efficacy of their relics, and to what a height their imagination was raiſed by their prejudices in favour of the appellants, by the high

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opinion they had of the Abbé's extraordinary ſanctity, by the rumours of miracles daily ſpread and propagated, and by the vaſt crouds which attended at the tomb, it would have been really a wonder, if amongſt the multitude that came for cure, there had not been ſeveral who found themſelves greatly relieved. The advocates for the miracles mightily extol the extraordinary faith and confidence the ſick perſons had in the interceſſion of the bleſſed Deacon, as they call him. And the force of their imagination when carried to ſo extraordinary a pitch, might in ſome particular caſes produce great effects. Many wonderful inſtances to this purpoſe have been obſerved and recorded by the ableſt phyſicians, by which it appears what a mighty influence imagination, accompanied with ſtrong paſſions, hath often had upon human bodies, eſpecially in the cure of diſeaſes. It hath often done more in a ſhort time this way, than a long courſe of medicines have been able to accompliſh. It is not therefore to be much wondered at, that as the caſe was circumſtanced, amidſt ſuch a multitude of perſons ſome ſurprizing cures were wrought. But it could not be expected that the effect would be conſtant and uniform If it anſwered in ſome inſtances, it would fail in many more. And accordingly ſo it was with regard to theſe pretended miraculous cures. And if this had been the caſe in the extraordinary cures wrought by our Saviour, there would have been ground of ſuſpicion, that what ſome have

have alleged might poſſibly have been true, that his miracles owed their force, not to any ſupernatural energy, but to the power of imagination. But taking theſe miracles as they are recorded in the goſpels, it is manifeſt that there can be no juſt ground for ſuch a pretence. They exhibit evident proofs of a divine interpoſition, which cannot be ſaid of theſe reported to have been wrought at the Abbé's tomb. M. *de Montgeron*, in his book dedicated to the King, publiſhed an account of eight or nine cures. And it is to be ſuppoſed, that he fixed upon thoſe which, he thought, had the appearance of being moſt ſignally miraculous. And yet the very firſt of theſe miracles, *viz.* that affirmed to have been wrought upon *Don Alphonſo de Palacio*, appeareth plainly by taking the whole of the relation, as M. *Montgeron* himſelf hath given it, to have had nothing in it properly miraculous, as Mr. *Adams* hath clearly ſhewn *. And with regard both to that and the other eight miracles ſo pompouſly diſplayed by M. *de Montgeron*, M. *Des Voeux* has very ingeniouſly and judiciouſly, after a diſtinct examination of each of them, made it appear that they might have been wrought without ſuppoſing any miraculous or ſupernatural interpoſition at all. See the laſt letter of his *Critique Generale*. LETTER IV.

III. Another conſideration, which ſhews the great difference there is between the miracles wrought at the firſt eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity,

* Adams's Eſſay, in anſwer to Hume, p. 76, 77.

and

LETTER IV. and those said to have been wrought at the tomb of the Abbé *de Paris*, and that no argument can reasonably be brought from the latter to the prejudice of the former, is taken from the many suspicious circumstances attending the latter, from which the former were entirely free. Christ's miracles were wrought, in a grave and decent, in a great but simple manner, becoming one sent of God, without any absurd or ridiculous ceremonies, or superstitious observances. But the miracles of the Abbé *de Paris* were attended with circumstances that had all the marks of superstition, and which seemed designed and fitted to strike the imagination. The earth of his tomb was often made use of, or the waters of the well of his house. The nine days devotion was constantly used, and frequently repeated again and again by the same persons; a ceremony derived originally from the Pagans, and which hath been condemned as superstitious by some eminent divines of the *Romish* church †. Another circumstance to be observed with relation to Christ's miracles, is that, as hath been already hinted, they were not only perfected at once, but the persons found themselves healed and restored without trouble or difficulty. But in the case of the cures affirmed to have been wrought at the Abbé's tomb, it appeareth from their own accounts, not only that they were gradual and slow, but that the persons on whom these cures were wrought, frequently suffered

† Lettres sur les Miracles, p. 258, 299. 336, 337.

the

the moſt grievous and exceſſive pains and tor- LETTER
ments, and which they themſelves repreſent to IV.
have been greater than ever they had felt be-
fore, or were able to expreſs; and theſe pains
often continued for ſeveral days together in the
utmoſt extremity ‡. To which may be added
the violent agitations and convulſions, which
became ſo uſual on theſe occaſions, that they
came at length to be regarded as ſymptoms of
the miraculous cures; though they could not
be properly regarded in this view, ſince many
of thoſe who had thoſe convulſions found no
relief in their maladies, and even grew worſe
than before. They were frequently attended
with ſtrange contorſions, ſometimes frightful,
ſometimes ridiculous, and ſometimes inconſiſtent
with the rules of modeſty and decency ‖. And
accordingly they have been condemned by ſome
of the moſt eminent *Janſeniſt* divines. In 1735
there was publiſhed at *Paris* a remarkable piece,
intituled,

‡ Lettres ſur les Miracles, p. 339, *et ſeq.*

‖ Some of thoſe that were ſeized with theſe convulſions, or pretended to be ſo, were guilty of the moſt extravagant follies. They pretended to prophecy, and uttered ſeveral predictions, which the event ſoon proved to be falſe. One of them went ſo far as to foretel that the church-yard of *St. Medard*, which had been ſhut by the King's order, ſhould be opened, and that M. *de Paris* ſhould appear in the church in the preſence of great numbers of people on the firſt of *May* following. See this and other remarkable things relating to theſe convulſions in M. *Vernet's* Traité de la Verité de la Religion Chretienne, Sect. 7. chap. 22, 23. And there cannot be a greater proof of the power of M. *de Montgeron's* prejudices, than that, in the laſt edition of his book in three volumes 4to, he has particularly applied himſelf to ſupport and juſtify theſe convulſions.

LETTER IV. intituled, *Conſultation ſur les Convulſions*, ſigned by thirty appellant doctors, men of great reputation among the *Janſeniſts* for learning, judgment, and probity; the greater part of whom had at firſt entertained favourable thoughts of thoſe convulſions; and ſome of them had publickly declared them to be the work of God. But now they pronounced them to be unworthy of God, of his infinite majeſty, wiſdom, and goodneſs: They declared that it was a folly, a fanaticiſm, a ſcandal, and in one word, a blaſphemy againſt God, to attribute to him theſe operations; and did not ſcruple to intimate, that they rendered the miraculous cures, to which they were pretended to be annexed, ſuſpected. Theſe doctors, who were called the Conſultants, condemned all the convulſions in general. Others of the *Janſeniſt* divines, whom M. *de Montgeron* has diſtinguiſhed by the title of the Antiſecouriſtes, and whom he acknowleges to be among the moſt zealous appellants, and to be perſons of great merit and eminence, though they did not condemn all the convulſions, yet paſſed a very ſevere cenſure upon thoſe of them which that gentleman looks upon to be the moſt extraordinary and miraculous of all. And with regard to theſe convulſions in general it may be obſerved, that, by the acknowlegement of the moſt skilful phyſicians, nervous affections have frequently produced ſtrange ſymptoms; that they are often of a catching contagious nature, and eaſily communicated; and that they may be coun-

counterfeited by art. Many of thoſe that were seized by Mr. *Heraut*, the Lieutenant de Police, acknowleged to him that they had counterfeited convulſions. In conſequence of which there was an ordonnance publiſhed by the King, *January* 27, 1732, for ſearching out and apprehending thoſe impoſtors. And yet Mr. *Hume* has thought proper to repreſent it, as if Monſieur *Heraut*, though he had full power to ſeize and examine the *witneſſes* and *ſubjects* of theſe miracles, *could never reach any thing ſatisfactory againſt them.* LETTER IV.

There muſt be owned to be circumſtances, which adminiſter juſt grounds of ſuſpicion, and which make a wide difference between the miracles pretended to have been wrought at the tomb of the Abbé *de Paris*, and thoſe that were performed by our Saviour, and by the Apoſtles in his name.

IV. The next obſervation I ſhall make is this, that ſeveral of the miracles aſcribed to the Abbé, and which were pretended to be proved by many witneſſes, were afterwards clearly convicted of falſhood and impoſture; which bringeth a great diſcredit upon all the reſt. Whereas nothing of this kind can be alleged againſt the miracles by which Chriſtianity was atteſted. The affair of *Anne le Franc*, of which ſome account was given above, ſhews, as M. *Des Voeux* juſtly obſerves, how little dependence is to be had upon informations in this cauſe directed by *Janſeniſts*. But this is not the only inſtance of this kind.

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They had publiſhed, that *La Dalmaix* had been miraculouſly cured by the Abbé's interceſſion; and this was proved by a letter pretended to have been written by herſelf. And yet this pretended miraculous cure was afterwards denied by the perſon herſelf, by her mother, and all her ſiſters: And by an arret of parliament of *May* 17, 1737, a perſon was declared to be convicted of having forged that, and ſome other letters under the name of *Dalmaix* *. The Sieur *le Doux* openly retracted the relation of a miracle ſaid to have been wrought upon himſelf. M. *Des Voeux* gives ſeveral other inſtances of falſe miracles, publiſhed by the *Janſeniſts*, and afterwards acknowleged to be ſo †. *Jean Niuet* was repreſented, by deciſive informations, as cured of his deafneſs, and yet it is certain that he was deaf after, as well as before. The record of the informations made by Mr. *Thomaſſin* is full of contradictions, which diſcover the falſhood and perjury of the principal actreſs, and of the only witneſs of the miracle, as the archbiſhop of *Sens* has well proved. Many of which proofs are paſſed over in ſilence by M. *le Gros*, who undertook to anſwer him ‖. Some of the witneſſes and perſons concerned withdrew, to eſcape the ſearch that was made for them, and to ſhun the examination and inquiry which the king had ordered; and others, who had atteſted

* Vernet ubi ſupra, Chap. XXI. † Lettres ſur les Miracles, p. 171, *et ſeq.* Critique Generale, p. 204, &c. 233, 234. ‖ *Ib.* p. 242, 243.

that they were cured by the interceſſion of the Abbé *de Paris*, afterwards retracted it. The certificates themſelves, on which ſo great a ſtreſs is laid, tend in many inſtances to increaſe the ſuſpicion againſt thoſe facts, which they were deſigned to confirm. The very number of thoſe certificates, many of which are nothing at all to the purpoſe, and ſerve only for ſhew, are plain proofs of art and deſign. The manner of drawing up thoſe certificates, and the relations of the miracles, and the ſtyle and form of expreſſion, ſhew that the perſons in whoſe names they are drawn, had the aſſiſtance of perſons of a capacity much ſuperior to their own. Long pieces in a correct ſtyle, and in perfect good order, were publiſhed under the name of mean and illiterate perſons. M. *le Gros* owns, that the relation of *Geneviere Colin* was reformed as to the ſtile by a perſon whom ſhe deſired to do it. Thus they had it in their power, under pretence of reforming, to alter it, and got the ſimple perſon to ſign the whole. Five witneſſes in the caſe of *Anne le Franc* depoſe, that their certificates left with the notary were altered, falſified, and embelliſhed with divers circumſtances. Many of the relations which were at firſt publiſhed, and were not thought full enough, were afterwards ſuppreſſed, and do not appear in M. *de Montgeron*'s collection, and others more ample were ſubſtituted in their ſtead, and embelliſhed with many ſtriking circumſtances, which were omitted in the firſt relation. Many of the witneſſes

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neſſes in their depoſitions carry it farther, than according to their own account they could have any certain knowlege. Some of them appear to have been ſurprized into their teſtimonies by falſe or imperfect repreſentations; and artifices were employed to procure certificates from phyſicians, without bringing the caſe fully before them, or ſuffering them fairly to examine it.

To all which it may be added, that there is great reaſon to ſuſpect, that many poor people feigned maladies, and pretended to be cured, on purpoſe to procure the gifts, and benefactions of others; which many of them did to good advantage. It is well known, and has been often proved, that in the *Romiſh* church there have been inſtances of perſons, who made a trade of feigning maladies, and pretending to be miraculouſly cured. Such a one was *Catharine des Pres*, who was afterwards convicted by her own confeſſion; of which Father *Le Brun* hath given a particular account, *Hiſt. Crit. des. Prat. Superſtit.* liv. 2. cap. 4. who hath alſo detected ſeveral other falſe miracles which had been believed by numbers of that church. And may we not reaſonably ſuſpect the ſame of many poor people, who came to the tomb of the Abbè *de Paris?* See all theſe things ſhewn in M. *Des Voeux's Letters ſur les Miracles, Lettre* V. VI. and eſpecially in the VIIth and VIIIth Letters of his *Critique Generale*; where he particularly examineth every one of the miracles produced by M. *de Montgeron.* It is his obſervation, that the

the more carefully we conſider thoſe relations, and compare them with the pieces that are deſigned to juſtify them, the more plainly the falſhood of them appeareth. And accordingly he hath found out not merely a ſingle contradiction, but numerous contradictions in the relations of the ſeveral miracles, compared with the certificates, and the pieces produced in qualification of them. And therefore he asketh with good reaſon, what becomes of demonſtrations, built on ſuch relations, and ſuch certificates? He very properly obſerves, that the falſity even of a ſmall number of facts, which are pretended to be proved by certificates, that were collected by thoſe who took pains to verify the miracles, are ſufficient to diſcredit all others founded on ſuch certificates. LETTER IV.

If the ſame things could have been juſtly objected againſt the miracles recorded in the New Teſtament, Chriſtianity, conſidering the other diſadvantages it laboured under, could never have been eſtabliſhed. But the caſe with regard to theſe miracles was very different. They were not indeed proved by certificates, which may be procured by art and management. The firſt publiſhers of the Chriſtian religion did not go about to collect evidences and teſtimonies. Nor was there any need of their doing ſo in facts that were publicly known, and the reality of which their enemies themſelves were not able to deny. They acted with greater ſimplicity, and with an open confidence of truth. Their nar-

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rations are plain and artleſs; nor do they take pains to prepoſſeſs or influence the reader, either by artful inſinuations, or too *violent aſſertions*; which our author mentions as a ſuſpicious circumſtance. Never were any of their enemies able to convict them of falſhood. Far from ever denying the facts they had witneſſed, or withdrawing for fear of having thoſe facts inquired into, as ſeveral did in the other caſe, they openly avowed thoſe facts before the public tribunals, and before perſons of the higheſt authority; they never varied in their teſtimony, but perſiſted in it with an unfainting conſtancy, and ſealed it with their blood. And it gives no ſmall weight to their teſtimony, that they witneſſed for facts which were deſigned to confirm a ſcheme of religion contrary to their own moſt rooted prejudices. Nor can it be alleged, that they were themſelves divided about the reality and divinity of the miracles wrought by Chriſt and his apoſtles, much leſs that they rejected and condemned many of them as fooliſh, ſcandalous, and injurious to the Divine Majeſty; which was the cenſure paſſed upon ſome of the extraordinary facts relating to the Abbé *de Paris*, by the moſt eminent *Janſeniſt* divines.

Finally, the laſt obſervation I ſhall make is this: That the miracles of our Saviour and his apoſtles appear to have been wrought for an end worthy of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs. The declared deſign of them was to give an atteſtation to the divine miſſion of the moſt excellent

perſon that ever appeared in the world, and to confirm the beſt ſcheme of religion that was ever publiſhed, the moſt manifeſtly conducive to the glory of God, and to the ſalvation of mankind. Here was an end worthy of God, and for which it was fit for him to interpoſe in the moſt extraordinary manner. And accordingly this religion thus atteſted and confirmed was eſtabliſhed in the world, and ſoon triumphed over all oppoſition. All the power of the adverſary, civil or ſacerdotal, could not put a ſtop to its progreſs, or to the wonderful works done in confirmation of it. The effects which followed, conſidering the amazing difficulties it had to ſtruggle with, and the ſeeming weakneſs and meanneſs of the inſtruments made uſe of to propagate it, proved the reality of thoſe miracles, and that the whole was carried on by a divine power. But if we turn our views on the other hand to the miracles pretended to have been wrought at the tomb of the Abbé *de Paris*, it doth not appear that they anſwered any valuable end. There has indeed been an end found out for them, *viz.* to give a teſtimony from heaven to the cauſe of the appellants. But we may juſtly conclude from the wiſdom of God, that in that caſe it would have been ſo ordered as to make it evident that this was the intention of them, and that he would have taken care that no oppoſition from men ſhould prevail to defeat the deſign for which he interpoſed in ſo extraordinary a manner. But this was far from being

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the caſe. Mr. *Hume* indeed tells us, that "no "*Janſeniſt* was ever at a loſs to account for the "ceſſation of the miracles, when the church-"yard was ſhut up by the King's edict. 'Twas "the touch of the tomb which operated thoſe "extraordinary effects, and when no one could "approach the tomb, no effect could be ex-"pected *." But ſuppoſing that the deſign of thoſe extraordinary divine interpoſitions was to give a teſtimony from heaven to the cauſe of the appellants, it is abſurd to imagine that it would have been in the power of an earthly prince, by ſhutting up the tomb to put a ſtop to the courſe of the miraculous operations, and to render the deſign of God of none effect ‖. It ſtrengthens this, when it is farther conſidered, that the whole affair of theſe pretended miracles turned in the iſſue rather to the diſadvantage of the cauſe it was deſigned to confirm. It hath been already obſerved, that ſome of the moſt eminent among the appellant doctors, and who were moſt zealouſly attached to that cauſe, were greatly ſcandalized at ſeveral of thoſe miracles, and eſpecially at the extraordinary convulſions which generally attended them. The cenſures they paſſed upon them gave occaſion to bitter

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 208.

‖ M. de Montgeron indeed will not allow that the miraculous operations ceaſed at the ſhutting up of the tomb; but by the miraculous operation, he principally underſtands the convulſions, which continued ſtill to be carried on; but which many of the principal Janſeniſts were far from looking upon as tokens of a divine interpoſition.

conten-

contentions, and mutual ſevere reproaches and accuſations. Some of the *Janſeniſt* writers themſelves complain, that whereas before there was an entire and perfect union and harmony among them, as if they had been all of one heart and ſoul, there have been ſince that time cruel diviſions and animoſities, ſo that thoſe who were friends before became irreconcileable enemies†. And can it be imagined, that God would execute his deſigns in ſo imperfect a manner? That he would exert his own divine power to give teſtimony to that cauſe, and yet do it in ſuch a way as to weaken that cauſe inſtead of ſupporting it, to raiſe prejudices againſt it in the minds of enemies inſtead of gaining them, and to divide and offend the friends of it inſtead of confirming and uniting them? Upon the whole, with regard to the atteſtations given to Chriſtianity, all was wiſe, conſiſtent, worthy of God, and ſuited to the end for which it was deſigned. But the other is a broken, incoherent ſcheme, which cannot be reconciled to itſelf, nor made to conſiſt with the wiſdom and harmony of the divine proceedings. The former therefore is highly credible, though the latter is not ſo.

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The ſeveral conſiderations which have been mentioned do each of them ſingly, much more all of them together, ſhew ſuch ſignal differences between the miracles recorded in the goſpels, and thoſe aſcribed to the Abbé *de Paris*, that it muſt argue a peculiar degree of confidence to

† Crit. Gener. lettre V. p. 159, *et ſeq.*

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pretend to run a parallel between the one and the other, much more to affirm, as Mr. *Hume* has done, that the latter *much ſurpaſs* the former in *credit and authority*. This only ſhews how gladly theſe gentlemen would lay hold on any pretence to invalidate the evidences of Chriſtianity. Thus Mr. *Chubb*, in a diſcourſe he publiſhed on miracles, in which he pretends impartially to repreſent the reaſonings on both ſides, produced with great pomp, a pretended miracle wrought in the *Cevennes* in 1703, and repreſented it as of equal credit with thoſe of the Goſpel. M. *le Moyne*, in his anſwer to him, hath evinced the falſhood of that ſtory in a manner that admits of no reply *. And yet it is not improbable, that ſome future deiſt may ſee fit ſome time or other to revive that ſtory, and oppoſe it to the miracles recorded in the New Teſtament.

Mr. *Hume* concludes his Eſſay with applauding his own performance, and is the better pleaſed with the *way of reaſoning* he has made uſe of, as he thinks "it may ſerve to confound "thoſe dangerous friends, or diſguiſed enemies "to the Chriſtian religion, who have undertaken "to defend it by the principles of human rea-"ſon. Our moſt holy religion (ſaith he) is "founded on faith, not on reaſon: And 'tis a "ſure method of expoſing it to put it to ſuch a "trial, as it is by no means fitted to endure." And he calls thoſe, who undertake to defend re-

* Le Moyne on Miracles, p. 422, &c.

ligion

ligion by reaſon, *pretended Chriſtians* †. Such a mean and ungenerous ſneer is below animadverſion. All that can be gathered from it is, that theſe gentlemen are very uneaſy at the attempts which have been made to defend Chriſtianity in a way of reaſon and argument. They it ſeems are mightily concerned for *the preſervation* of our holy faith, and in their great friendſhip for that cauſe would give it up as indefenſible. And if the beſt way of befriending the Chriſtian religion be to endeavour to ſubvert the evidences by which it is eſtabliſhed, our author hath taken effectual care to convince the world of his friendly intentions towards it. As to the brief hints he hath given towards the end of his Eſſay againſt the *Moſaic* Hiſtory, and the miracles recorded there, I ſhall not here take any notice of them, both becauſe Mr. *Adams* hath clearly and ſuccinctly obviated them in his anſwer to that Eſſay, p. 88-94, and becauſe I ſhall have occaſion to reſume this ſubject, when I come to make obſervations on Lord *Bolingbroke*'s Poſthumous Works, who hath with great virulence and bitterneſs, uſed his utmoſt efforts to expoſe the *Moſaic* writings.

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† Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 204, 205.

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Lord Bolingbroke's *Poſthumous Works, an inſolent attempt on religion natural and revealed. Not written according to the laws of method. His fair profeſſions, and the advantageous account he gives of his own deſign. He exalteth himſelf above all that have written before him, antients and moderns: Blames the Free-thinkers for taking unbecoming liberties: Yet writes himſelf without any regard to the rules of decency. His outrageous invectives againſt the holy Scriptures, particularly againſt the writings of* Moſes *and* St. Paul. *The ſevere cenſures he paſſes on the moſt celebrated Heathen Philoſophers. But above all, the virulent and contemptuous reproaches he caſts upon Chriſtian Philoſophers and Divines, antient and modern. A general account of his ſcheme, and the main principles to which it is reducible.*

SIR,

THE account you gave me of the late pompous edition of the works of the late Lord Viſcount *Bolingbroke* in five large volumes quarto made me very deſirous to ſee them. But it was ſome time after the publication of them, before I had an opportunity of gratifying my curioſity,

riosity. I have now read them with ſome care and attention. The works he had publiſhed in his own life-time, and which are republiſhed in this edition, had created a high opinion of the genius and abilities of the author. In them he had treated chiefly concerning matters of a political nature. And it were greatly to be wiſh'd for his own reputation, and for the benefit of mankind, that he had confined himſelf to ſubjects of that kind, in that part of his works which he deſigned to be publiſhed after his deceaſe. Theſe his poſthumous works make by far the greater part of this collection. His *Letters on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory*, which were publiſhed before the reſt, had prepared the world not to look for any thing from him, that was friendly to Chriſtianity or the holy Scriptures. But I am apt to think that the extreme inſolence, the virulence and contempt with which in his other poſthumous works he hath treated thoſe things that have been hitherto accounted moſt ſacred among Chriſtians, and the open attacks he hath made upon ſome important principles of natural religion itſelf, have exceeded whatever was expected or imagined. There is ground to apprehend, that the quality and reputation of the author, his high pretenſions to reaſon and freedom of thought, his great command of words, and the poſitive and dictatorial air he every-where aſſumes, may be apt to impoſe upon many readers, and may do miſchief in an age too well prepared already for receiving ſuch impreſſions. Upon theſe con-

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LETTER V. considerations you have been pleased to think, that a distinct examination of this writer might help to furnish a very proper supplement to the view which hath been taken of the Deistical Writers of the last and present century. I was, I must confess, not very fond of the employment. For what pleasure could be proposed in raking into such a heap of materials, which are thrown together without much order, and among which one is sure to meet with many things shocking to any man that has a just veneration for our holy religion, and who hath its honour and interests really at heart.

Before I enter on a distinct consideration of what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered both against natural and revealed religion, I shall make some general observations on his spirit and design, and his manner of treating the subjects he has undertaken, which may help us to form a judgment of his character as a writer, and how far he is to be depended upon.

The manner of writing his Lordship hath generally chosen is by way of essays. He has been far from confining himself to the laws of method: And perhaps thought it beneath so great a genius to stoop to common rules. But there is certainly a medium between being too stiff and pedantic, and too loose and negligent. He is sensible that he has not been very methodical, and seems to please himself in it. He declares that "he does not observe in these Essays, any "more than he used to do in conversation, a "just

" juſt proportion in the members of his diſ- LETTER
" courſe *." And that he has thrown his re- V.
flections upon paper as they " occurred to his
" thoughts, and as the frequent interruptions
" to which he was expoſed would give him
" leave †." He condeſcends to make a kind of apology for this way of writing, when he ſays, " I will endeavour not to be tedious; and this " endeavour will ſucceed the better perhaps by " declining any over-ſtrict obſervation of me- " thod ‡." But I am apt to think he would have been leſs tedious, and more enlightening to his reader, if he had been more obſervant of the rules of method. He might then have avoided many of thoſe repetitions and digreſſions, which ſo frequently recur in theſe Eſſays, and which notwithſtanding all the advantages of his ſtyle, and the vivacity of his imagination, often prove, if I may judge of others by myſelf, very diſagreeable and irkſome to the reader.

As to his deſign in theſe writings, if we are to take his own word for it, very great advantage might be expected from them to mankind. He believes " few men have conſulted others, " both the living and the dead, with leſs precipitation, and in a greater ſpirit of docility, " than he has done: He diſtruſted himſelf, not " his teachers, men of the greateſt name, an- " tient and modern. But he found at laſt, that

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 460. † *Ib.* p. 556.
‡ *Ib.* p. 318.

" it

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" it was ſafer to truſt himſelf than them, and " to proceed by the light of his own under- " ſtanding, than to wander after thoſe *ignes* " *fatui* of philoſophy *." He is ſenſible that " it is the modeſt, not the preſumptuous en- " quirer, who makes a real and ſafe progreſs " in the diſcovery of divine truth †;" and that " candour and knowlege are qualifications which " ſhould always go together, and are inſepa- " rable from the love of truth, and promote " one another in the diſcovery of it ‡." He " contents himſelf to be governed by the dic- " tates of nature, and is therefore in no dan- " ger of becoming atheiſtical, ſuperſtitious, or " ſceptical ||."

In his introduction to his Eſſays, in a letter to Mr. *Pope*, he gives a moſt pompous account of his intentions, and evidently raiſeth himſelf above the greateſt men antient or modern. He repreſents metaphyſical divines and philoſophers, as " having bewildered themſelves, and a great " part of mankind, in ſuch inextricable laby- " rinths of hypothetical reaſonings, that few can " find their way back, and none can find it for- " ward into the road of truth §." He declares that " natural theology, and natural religion, " have been corrupted to ſuch a degree, that " it is grown, and was ſo long ſince, as neceſ- " ſary to plead the cauſe of God againſt the " divine as againſt the atheiſt; to aſſert his ex-

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 370. † *Ib.* p. 344.
‡ *Ib.* p. 492. || Vol. V. p. 492. § Vol. III. p. 327.

" iſtence

" iſtence againſt the latter, to defend his at- LETTER
" tributes againſt the former, and to juſtify his V.
" providence againſt both *." That " truth and
" falſhood, knowlege and ignorance, revela-
" tions of the Creator, inventions of the crea-
" ture, dictates of reaſon, ſallies of enthuſiaſm,
" have been blended ſo long together in ſyſtems
" of theology, that it may be thought danger-
" ous to ſeparate them †." And he ſeems to think this was a task reſerved for him. He propoſes " to diſtinguiſh genuine and pure Theiſm
" from the profane mixtures of human imagi-
" nation; and to go to the root of that error
" which encourages our curioſity, ſuſtains our
" pride, fortifies our prejudices, and gives pre-
" tence to deluſion; to diſcover the true nature
" of human knowlege, how far it extends, how
" far it is real, and where and how it begins to
" be fantaſtical ‡;" " that the gaudy viſions of
" error being diſpell'd, men may be accuſtomed
" to the ſimplicity of truth." For this he expects to be " treated with ſcorn and contempt
" by the whole theological and metaphyſical
" tribe, and railed at as an infidel ‖." But " laying aſide all the immenſe volumes of fathers
" and councils, ſchoolmen, caſuiſts, and contro-
" verſial writers, he is determined to ſeek for ge-
" nuine Chriſtianity with that ſimplicity of
" ſpirit with which it is taught in the Goſpel
" by Chriſt himſelf §. The guides he propoſes

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol III. p. 327, 328. † *Ib.* p. 331.
‡ *Ib.* p. 328. ‖ *Ib.* p. 330. § *Ib.* p. 339.

to

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" to follow are the works, and the word of " God *." And he declares, that " for himſelf " he thought it much better not to write at all, " than to write under any reſtraint from deli- " vering the whole truth of things as it appeared " to him †."

But though he thus profeſſes an impartial love of truth, and to deliver his ſentiments with free- dom, yet he ſeems reſolved, where he happens to differ from received opinions, to ſhew a de- cent regard to the eſtabliſhed religion of his country. He praiſeth *Scævola* and *Varro*, who, he ſays, " Both thought that things evidently " falſe might deſerve an outward reſpect, when " they are interwoven with a ſyſtem of govern- " ment. This outward reſpect every good ſub- " ject will ſhew them in ſuch a caſe. He will " not propagate thoſe errors, but he will be " cautious how he propagates even truth in op- " poſition to them ‡." He blames not only " that arbitrary *tyrannical ſpirit*, that puts *on the maſk of religious zeal*, but that *preſump- tuous factious ſpirit* that has appeared *under the maſk of liberty*; and which, if it ſhould *pre- vail, would deſtroy at once the general influ- ence of religion, by ſhaking the foundations of it which education had laid*. But he thinks, " there is a middle way between theſe extremes, " in which a reaſonable man and a good citizen " may direct his ſteps ||." It is to be preſumed

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 347. † Vol. IV. p. 54. ‡ Vol. III. p. 331. || *Ib.* p. 332.

therefore

therefore that he would have it thought that this is the way he himſelf hath taken. He mentions with approbation the maxims of the *Soufys*, a ſet of philoſophers in *Perſia*: One of which is —" If you find no reaſon to doubt concerning " the opinions of your fathers, keep to them, " they will be ſufficient for you. If you find " any reaſon to doubt concerning them, ſeek " the truth quietly, but take care not to diſ- " turb the minds of other men." He profeſſeth to proceed by theſe rules, and blameth ſome who are called Free-thinkers, for imagining that " as every man has a right to think and judge " for himſelf, he has therefore a right of ſpeak- " ing according to the full freedom of his " thoughts. The freedom belongs to him as a " rational creature: He lies under the reſtraint " as a member of ſociety *."

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But notwithſtanding theſe fair profeſſions, perhaps there ſcarce ever was an author, who had leſs regard to the rules of decency in writing than Lord *Bolingbroke*. The holy Scriptures are received with great veneration among Chriſtians; and the religion there taught is the religion publicly profeſſed and eſtabliſhed in theſe nations; and therefore, according to his own rule, ought to be treated with a proper reſpect. And yet on many occaſions he throws out the moſt outrageous abuſe againſt thoſe ſacred writings, and the authors of them. He compares the hiſtory of the Pentateuch to the *Romances* Don Quixote

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 333, 334.

was

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was ſo fond of, and pronounces that they who receive them as authentic are not much leſs mad than he *. That "it is no leſs than blaſphemy "to aſſert the *Jewiſh* Scriptures to have been "divinely inſpired;" and he repreſents thoſe that attempt to juſtify them as having "ill hearts "as well as heads, and as worſe than atheiſts, tho' "they may paſs for ſaints†." He chargeth thoſe with impiety, "who would impoſe on us as the "word of God, a book which contains ſcarce "any thing that is not repugnant to the wiſ-"dom, power, and other attributes of a Su-"preme All-perfect Being‡." And he roundly pronounceth, that "there are groſs defects and "palpable falſhoods in almoſt every page of the "Scriptures, and the whole tenor of them is "ſuch, as no man, who acknowleges a Supreme "All-perfect Being, can believe it to be his "word §." This is a brief ſpecimen of his invectives againſt the ſacred writings of the Old Teſtament, and which he repeateth on many occaſions. He affecteth indeed to ſpeak with ſeeming reſpect of Chriſtianity, yet he hath not only endeavoured to invalidate the evidences that are brought to ſupport it, but he paſſeth the ſevereſt cenſures upon doctrines which he himſelf repreſenteth as original and eſſential doctrines of the Chriſtian religion. He makes the moſt injurious repreſentation of the doctrine of our redemption by the blood of Chriſt, and

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 280. † *Ib.* p. 299. 306. ‡ *Ib.* p. 308. § *Ib.* p. 298.

chargeth

chargeth it as repugnant to all our ideas of order, of juſtice, of goodneſs, and even of theiſm *. And after a moſt virulent invective againſt the *Jewiſh* notion of God, as partial, cruel, arbitrary and unjuſt, he aſſerts that the character imputed to him by the Chriſtian doctrine of redemption, and future puniſhments, is as bad or worſe †. Great is the contempt and reproach he hath poured forth upon St. *Paul*, who was the penman of a conſiderable part of the New Teſtament, and whoſe name and writings have been always deſervedly had in great veneration in the Chriſtian church. He chargeth him with diſſimulation and falſhood, and even with madneſs ‡. He aſſerts that his goſpel was different from that of Chriſt, and contradictory to it §. That he writes confuſedly, obſcurely, and unintelligibly;—and where his goſpel is intelligible, it is often abſurd, profane, and trifling ‖.

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Some of thoſe gentlemen who have ſhewn little reſpect for the holy Scriptures, have yet ſpoke with admiration of many of the ſages of antiquity. But Lord *Bolingbroke* has on all occaſions treated the greateſt men of all ages with the utmoſt contempt and ſcorn. It is allowable indeed for ſincere and impartial enquirers after truth, to differ from perſons of high reputation for knowlege and learning, antient and modern. And ſometimes it is the more neceſſary to point

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. IV. p. 318. Vol. V. p. 291. 552.
† *Ib.* p. 532, 533. ‡ Vol. IV. p. 172. 306. § *Ib.* p. 313. 327, 328. ‖ *Ib.* p. 330, 331.

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out their errors, leſt the authority of great names ſhould lead men aſide from truth. But whilſt we think ourſelves obliged to detect their miſtakes, there is a decent regard to be paid them. It would be wrong to treat them in a reproachful and contemptuous manner. Yet this is what our author hath done. If all the paſſages were laid together, in which he hath inveighed againſt the wiſeſt and moſt learned men of all ages, eſpecially the philoſophers, metaphyſicians, and divines, they would fill no ſmall volume. And indeed theſe kind of declamatory invectives recur ſo often in theſe Eſſays, as cannot but create great diſguſt to every reader of taſte. I ſhall mention a few paſſages out of a multitude that might be produced, and which may ſerve as a ſample of the reſt. He ſaith of the philoſophers, that "they ſeem to acquire knowlege only as "a neceſſary ſtep to error, and grow ſo fond of "the latter, that they eſteem it no longer an "human, but raiſe it by an imaginary apotheoſis "up to a divine ſcience—That theſe ſearchers "after truth, theſe lovers of wiſdom, are nothing "better than venders of falſe wares---And the "moſt irrational of all proceedings paſs for the "utmoſt efforts of human reaſon*." He repreſents metaphyſical divines and philoſophers as having "wandered many thouſand years in "imaginary light and real darkneſs†." He frequently chargeth them with *madneſs*, and ſometimes with *blaſphemy*; and that they "flag-

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 490. † Vol. IV. p. 8.

"gered

" gered about, and jostled one another in their " dreams *." Speaking of *Plato* and *Aristotle*, he says, " their works have been preserved, per- " haps more to the detriment than to the ad- " vancement of learning †." And though he sometimes commends *Socrates*, he pronounces that he " substituted fantastical ideas instead of " real knowlege, and corrupted science to the " very source." That " he lost himself in the " clouds---when he declared, that the two offices " of philosophy are the contemplation of God, " and the abstracting of the soul from corporeal " sense;"---and that he and *Plato* were mad enough to think themselves capable of such contemplation and such abstraction ‡. Besides many occasional passages scattered throughout these Essays, there are several large sections which contain almost nothing else than invectives against *Plato* and his philosophy. He says, that a philosopher " treated every subject, whether cor- poreal or intellectual, like a bombast poet, and a " mad theologian §." That " he who reads " *Plato*'s works like a man in his senses, will be " tempted to think on many occasions that the " author was not so;"---And that " no man " ever dreamed so wildly as this author wrote ‖." He chargeth him with " a false sublime in style, " and that no writer can sink lower than he into " a tedious sophistical irony, into certain flimsy

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* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 553, 554. Vol. IV. p. 129. 150. † Vol. III. p. 392. ‡ Vol. IV. p. 113. § *Ib.* p. 129. ‖ *Ib.* p. 344. 357.

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" hypothetical reaſonings that prove nothing, " and into alluſions that are mere vulgariſms, " and that neither explain nor inforce any thing " that wants to be explained or inforced *." He repreſents all the commentators and *tranſlators* of *Plato* as *dull* or *mad*—and calls *Ficinus delirious*, and *Dacier ſimple* and a *bigot*, and a *Platonic madman* †. The true reaſon of the particular diſlike he every-where expreſſes againſt that philoſopher ſeems to be what he calls his " rambling ſpeculations about the divine and " ſpiritual nature, about immaterial ſubſtances, " about the immortality of the ſoul, and about " the rewards and puniſhments of a future " ſtate ‡."

As to the Stoics he declares, " that their theo- " logy and morality were alike abſurd." That in endeavouring to account how it came that there is evil in the world, and that the beſt men have often the greateſt ſhare of this evil, " they " talked mere nonſenſe, figurative, ſublime, me- " taphyſical, but nonſenſe ſtill §." The antient *theiſts* in general he repreſents as having been ſeduced many ways into a confederacy with the atheiſts, and particularly blames them for pretending to connect moral attributes, ſuch as we conceive them, with the phyſical attributes of God; which, he affirms, gave great advantage to the objections of the atheiſts ‖.

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. IV. p. 140, 141, 353, 354.
† *Ib.* p. 107. 140. 355. ‡ *Ib.* p. 347. 348. § Vol. V. p. 247. 317. ‖ *Ib.* p. 316.

But

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But there is no ſort of men againſt whom he inveighs with greater licence of reproach than the Chriſtian divines and philoſophers. He frequently ſpeaks of the antient fathers with the utmoſt contempt: That they were ſuperſtitious, credulous, lying men;---and that "the "greateſt of them were unfit to write or ſpeak "on any ſubject that required cloſeneſs of rea- "ſoning, an evangelical candour, and even "common ingenuouſneſs*." As to the more modern divines, he takes every occaſion of inſulting and abuſing them. Not only doth he repreſent them as "declaimers who have little "reſpect for their readers,---as hired to defend "the Chriſtian ſyſtem,---and as ſeeking nothing "more than the honour of the gown, by have- "ing the laſt word in every diſpute†." But he ſays, "they talk a great deal of blaſphemy on "the head of internal divine characters of Scrip- "ture‡." He often repeats it, that *atheiſts deny God*, but the *divines defame him*, which, he thinks, is the *worſe of the two*. He charges them with *madneſs*, and *worſe than madneſs* §. That "they have recourſe to trifling diſtinctions, "and dogmatical affirmations, the laſt retrench- "ments of obſtinacy ‖. That "of all fools "the moſt preſumptuous, and at the ſame time "the moſt trifling, are metaphyſical philoſo- "phers and divines ‡‡." He charges them in

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 337, 338. Vol. IV. p. 586. † Vol. III. p. 290. Vol. V. p. 286. 314. ‡ Vol. III. p. 272. § Vol. IV. p. 273. ‖ Vol. V. p. 188. ‡‡ *Ib.* p. 493.

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an addreſs he makes to God with "owning his "exiſtence only to cenſure his works, and the "diſpenſations of his providence*." And frequently repreſents them as *in alliance with the atheiſts*, as *betraying the cauſe of* God to them, and as doing *their beſt* in *concert with theſe their allies*, to deſtroy both the *goodneſs* and *juſtice* of God †. He declares, that "he who "follows them cannot avoid preſumption and "profaneneſs, and muſt be much upon his "guard to avoid blaſphemy ‡." That the "preachers of natural and revealed religion have "been loudeſt in their clamours againſt pro-"vidence, and have done nothing more than "repeat what the atheiſts have ſaid;---and that "they attempt to prove that the ſupreme Be-"ing is the tyrant of the world he governs §." And the ſame charge he advanceth againſt the Chriſtian philoſophers in general.

But beſides theſe general invectives againſt Chriſtian philoſophers and divines, he hath particularly attacked ſome of the moſt celebrated names in a manner little reconcileable to good manners, and the decency which ought to be obſerved towards perſons of diſtinguiſhed reputation, even when we think them in the wrong. Speaking of "many reverend perſons, who, he "ſays, have had their heads turned by a pre-"ternatural fermentation of the brain, or a phi-"loſophical delirium,"---- he obſerves, that

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. V. p. 339 † *Ib.* p. 341. 346. 393, &c, ‡ *Ib.* p. 464. § *Ib.* p. 484, 485.

"none

" none has been more ſo than Dr. *Cudworth*. " ---He read too much to think enough." He repreſents him as having " given a nonſenſical " paraphraſe of nonſenſe,"---and that " the good " man paſſed his life in the ſtudy of an unmean- " ing jargon: And as he learned ſo he taught*." He charges Biſhop *Cumberland* with " meta- " phyſical jargon, and theological blaſphemy †." *Stillingfleet* is ſpoken of with contempt; as alſo *Huet*, *Bochart*, and the Chriſtian antiquaries ‡. Nor is Archbiſhop *Tillotſon* treated with greater regard. He talks in a very ſlighting way of thoſe that have written on the law of nature, particularly *Grotius*, *Selden*, and *Puffendorf*. That they " puzzle and perplex the plaineſt thing " in the world, and ſeem to be great writers on " this ſubject, by much the ſame right as he " might be called a great traveller, who ſhould " go from *London* to *Paris* by the *Cape of* " *Good Hope* §." There is none of the Chriſtian philoſophers of whom he ſpeaks with ſo much reſpect as Mr. *Locke*; yet he repreſents him as having " dreamed that he had a power of " forming abſtract ideas;" and mentions this as a proof that " there is ſuch a thing as a philo- " ſophical delirium ‖." And he charges it upon him as a great inconſiſtency, that he ſhould write a Commentary on St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles, and a Diſcourſe on the Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity,

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 353. Vol. IV. p. 92. † Vol. V. p. 82. ‡ Vol. III. p. 264. Vol. IV. p. 13. § Vol. V. p. 68. ‖ Vol. III. p. 441, 442.

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after he had written an Eſſay on Human Underſtanding *.

But there is no one perſon whom he treats with ſo much rudeneſs and inſolence as the late eminently learned Dr. *Samuel Clarke*. He calls him a preſumptuous dogmatiſt, and repreſents him as having "impiouſly advanced, that we "know the rule God governs by as well as he, "---and that like another *Eunomius*, he pre-"ſumes to know God, his moral nature at leaſt, "and to teach others to know him, as well as "he knows himſelf †." He chargeth him with a *fooliſh and wicked rhodomontade*, "with pre-"tending to make infallible demonſtrations, "like the Pope's decrees, and ſending every "one to the devil, who does not believe in "them ‡:" And with a rhapſody of preſump-"tuous reaſonings, of prophane abſurdities, of "evaſions that ſeem to anſwer whilſt they only "perplex, and in one word, the moſt arbitrary "and leaſt reaſonable ſuppoſitions §." He ſaith, that "the retrenchments caſt up by him are ſee-"ble beyond belief;"---that "he boaſts like a "bully, who looks fierce, ſpeaks big, and is "little to be feared ‖." Not only does he call him an *audacious and vain ſophiſt* ‖‖, but he carries it ſo far as to ſay, that "he and *Wollaſton* "do in effect renounce God, as much as the "rankeſt of the atheiſtical tribe **. With re-

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. IV. p. 166. 295. † Vol. III. p. 52. Vol. V. p. 499. ‡ *Ib.* p. 252. § *Ib.* p. 292. ‖ *Ib.* p. 280. 293. ‖‖ *Ib.* p. 393. ** *Ib.* p. 484, 485.

gard

gard to the laſt-mentioned celebrated writer, Mr. *Wollaſton*, beſides the ſevere reproach caſt upon him in the paſſage I have juſt cited, Lord *Bolingbroke* elſewhere treats him as "a licen-"tious maker of hypotheſes---and a whining "philoſopher." He repreſents all that he hath ſaid about the immortality of the ſoul "as a "ſtring of arbitrary ſuppoſitions;" and that "his diſcourſe on that ſubject is ſuch as would "lead one to think that the philoſopher who "held it was a patient of Dr. *Monroe*'s, not yet "perfectly reſtored to his ſenſes*." He acknowleges him indeed to have been a man of *parts and learning*, but charges him with *writing nonſenſe*; that he, and ſuch as he, were *learned lunatics*; and he treats his way of arguing about a future ſtate, as a *ſpecimen of that ſort of madneſs*, which is called a *dementia quoad hoc*†. The ſame cenſure he paſſeth on the late Lord Preſident of *Scotland*, "that he was "indeed a man of capacity, good ſenſe, and "knowlege, but was in a *delirium*, and *mad* "*quoad hoc* when he wrote againſt *Tindal*‡." LETTER V.

You cannot but have obſerved in reading over ſeveral of the paſſages which have been produced, that it is familiar with Lord *Bolingbroke* to repreſent thoſe as mad and out of their ſenſes, who happen to differ from him, at leaſt as mad with regard to the particular point in difference. I ſhall only mention one paſſage more to this

* Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. III. p. 515. 518. Vol. V. p. 388.
† *Ib.* p. 474. ‡ *Ib.* p. 523.

purpoſe,

LETTER V. purpoſe, out of the many that might be produced. Having compared the reaſoners *a priori* to perſons in *Bedlam*, and the ſeveral ſorts of madmen there, he adds, that "atheiſts are one "ſort of madmen, many divines and theiſts "another ſort;"—and that "theſe ſorts of mad-"men are principally to be found in colleges "and ſchools, where different ſects have ren-"dered this ſort of madneſs, which is occaſional "elſewhere, both epidemical and traditional ‖." If one was to imitate this author's manner of talking, one might be apt to charge him as being ſeized with a ſort of madneſs when certain ſubjects come in his way—metaphyſics—artificial theology—*Plato* and Platonic philoſophy—ſpiritual ſubſtance, and incorporeal eſſence—but above all, the Chriſtian divines and clergy.—Theſe, when he happens to meet with them, bring one of his fits upon him, and often ſet him a raving for ſeveral pages together. But I confeſs I too much diſlike ſuch a way of writing, to make recriminations of this kind. And yet his Lordſhip tells the divines of the *diſcretion of their adverſaries*, and would have them *return it with diſcretion*. And he repreſents the *orthodox bullies*, as he calls them, as "affecting "to triumph over men, who employ but part "of their ſtrength, as tiring them with impertinent paradoxes, and provoking them with "unjuſt reflections, and often by the foulest "language †."

‖ Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. V. p. 369, 370. † Vol. III. p. 278, 283.

I am apt to think that by this time you are weary of reading over ſuch a heap of abuſive reflections, ſo unbecoming any man of learning and education, much more one ſo converſant in the polite world, as Lord *Bolingbroke* had been. The tranſcribing them out of his Eſſays was no very agreeable employment. But they ſo often occur there, and make ſo remarkable a part of the works of this right honourable author, that it was abſolutely neceſſary to take ſome notice of them. One thing may be ſafely collected from his writing after this manner, *viz.* that he had a very high opinion of the ſuperiority of his own underſtanding, and a ſovereign contempt for all thoſe that were in different ſentiments from him, whether philoſophers antient or modern, or divines, but eſpecially for the latter. LETTER V.

If we examine what foundation there is for theſe high pretenſions, or what new and important diſcoveries this writer hath made in religion or philoſophy, which may be of real uſe to mankind, the principal things in his ſcheme may be reduced to the following heads:

1. That there is one Supreme All-perfect Being, the eternal and original cauſe of all things, of almighty power and infinite wiſdom; but that we muſt not pretend to aſcribe to him any moral attributes, diſtinct from his phyſical, eſpecially holineſs, juſtice, and goodneſs: That he has not theſe attributes according to the ideas we conceive of them, nor any thing equivalent to thoſe

LETTER V. those qualities as they are in us; and that to pretend to deduce moral obligations from those attributes, or to talk of imitating God in his moral attributes, is enthusiasm or blasphemy.

2. That God made the world, and established the laws of this system at the beginning: But that he doth not now concern himself in the affairs of men, or that if he doth, his providence only extendeth to collective bodies, but hath no regard to individuals, to their actions, or to the events that befal them.

3. That the soul is not a distinct substance from the body: That the whole man is dissolved at death; and that though it may be useful to mankind to believe the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, yet it is a fiction, which hath no real foundation in nature and reason: And that to pretend to argue for future retributions from the apprehended unequal distributions of this present state, is absurd and blasphemous, and is to cast the most unworthy reflections on divine providence.

4. That the law of nature is what reason discovereth to us concerning our duty as founded in the human system: That it is clear and obvious to all mankind; but has been obscured and perverted by antient philosophers and modern divines: That it has not been set in a proper light by those who have undertaken to treat of it; and therefore he hath represented it in its genuine purity and simplicity: And that the sanctions

sanctions of that law relate to men not individually, but collectively considered. LETTER V.

5. That from the clearness and sufficiency of the law of nature, it may be concluded that God hath made no other revelation of his will to mankind: And that there is no need or use for any extraordinary supernatural revelation.

6. That it is profane and blasphemous to ascribe the *Jewish* Scriptures to revelation or inspiration from God: That the history contained there is false and incredible, and the scheme of religion taught in those writings is absolutely unworthy of God, and repugnant to his divine perfections.

7. That the New Testament consists of two different gospels, opposite to one another, that of Christ and that of St. *Paul*. That Christianity in its genuine simplicity, as taught by Jesus Christ, and contained in the evangelical writings, is a benevolent institution, and may be regarded as a republication of the law of nature; or rather of the theology of *Plato*: That the morals it teaches are pure, but no other than the philosophers had taught before, and that some of its precepts are not agreeable to the natural law; and some of its original doctrines, particularly those relating to the redemption of mankind by the death of Christ, and to future rewards and punishments, are absurd, and inconsistent with the attributes of God.

These appear to me to be the most remarkable things in the late Lord *Bolingbroke*'s Posthumous Works,

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Works, as far as natural and revealed religion is concerned. And the method I propoſe to purſue in my obſervations upon them is this:

I ſhall firſt conſider the attempts he hath made to ſubvert the main principles that lie at the foundation of all religion; *viz.* thoſe relating to the moral attributes of God, a particular providence extending to the individuals of the human race, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate of retributions. I ſhall next examine the account he hath given of the law of nature, and of the duties and ſanctions of that law. After which it will be proper to conſider what he hath offered concerning divine revelation in general, with a view to ſhew that an extraordinary revelation of the will of God to mankind is abſolutely needleſs, and that therefore we may conclude that God hath never given ſuch a revelation at all. I ſhall proceed in the next place to a particular and diſtinct examination of the objections he hath urged againſt the truth and divine original of the *Moſaic* revelation, and the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament. And ſhall conclude with conſidering what more directly relateth to the Chriſtian revelation properly ſo called, to its proofs and evidences, and to its laws and doctrines, all which he hath endeavoured to expoſe.

This I hope may be ſufficient to anſwer the deſign I have in view, which is to obviate the principal miſchiefs to religion, which Lord *Bolingbroke's*

lingbroke's Works ſeem fitted to produce. Other things there are in theſe volumes, which might furniſh matter for many reflections, but which I ſhall take little or no notice of, as they do not come within the compaſs of the plan I propoſe. LETTER V.

I am, &c.

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Lord Bolingbroke *aſſerts the exiſtence of God againſt the Atheiſts, but rejects the argument* a priori, *and that drawn from the general conſent of mankind. He is for reduceing all the divine attributes to wiſdom and power, and blames the divines for diſtinguiſhing between the phyſical and moral attributes. He aſſerts that we cannot aſcribe goodneſs and juſtice to God, according to our ideas of them, nor argue with any certainty about them. That it is abſurd to deduce moral obligations from the moral attributes of God, or to pretend to imitate him in thoſe attributes. Obſervations upon this ſcheme. It is ſhewn, that the moral attributes are neceſſarily included in the idea of the abſolutely perfect Being. The author's objections againſt aſcribing thoſe attributes to God, or diſtinguiſhing them from his phyſical attributes, particularly conſidered. His manifold inconſiſtencies and contradictions.*

SIR,

IN my laſt a general account was given of the ſcheme Lord *Bolingbroke* ſeems to have had in view in his Poſthumous Works, and of the

the main principles to which it is reducible. I LETTER VI.
now proceed to a more distinct examination of those principles; and shall begin with that which lieth at the foundation of all Religion, the existence and attributes of God. And it must be acknowleged, that his Lordship every where in the strongest terms asserteth the existence of the one Supreme All-perfect Being, the Great Author of the universe. He represents this as *strictly demonstrable*, and treats the opinion of the atheists as *infinitely absurd*; and that they can *only cavil*, but *cannot reason*, against the existence of the first cause; of which, he thinks, we may be in reason as sure as of our own existence. There are several passages in his works, in which he expresseth himself devoutly with regard to the Supreme Being, and professeth seriously to adore him. And there are some instances of his addressing him with great solemnity, and in a religious manner *.

I need not take any notice of what he hath briefly offered for demonstrating the existence of a Deity ‡. He has said nothing on this head, but what hath been frequently urged to great advantage by others before him; and particularly by Dr. *Clarke*, in what his Lordship is pleased to call his *pretended demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* ‖.

* See particularly Vol. III. p. 247. 358. Vol. V. p. 338, &c.
‡ Vol. III. p. 353, 354. ‖ *Ib.* p. 52.

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Our author indeed is for confining the proof to the argument *a poſteriori*, and is for abſolutely rejecting the argument *a priori*, whereas Dr. *Clarke* inſiſts upon both. And I cannot help thinking that both may be highly uſeful; and that they are then moſt effectual, and come with the greateſt force, when they come in aid of one another.

As Lord *Bolingbroke* rejects the argument *a priori* for the exiſtence and perfections of God, ſo he ſeems not willing to allow that which is drawn from the general conſent of mankind. He ſays, it will indeed prove, that men generally believed a God, but not that ſuch a Being exiſts; and he repreſents it as *trifling* to *inſiſt upon* it*. And in a letter occaſioned by one of Archbiſhop *Tillotſon*'s ſermons, Vol. III. p. 257, *et ſeq.* he finds fault with that great divine for making uſe of that argument, and diſingenuouſly repreſents it, as if he had reſted the proof of a Deity principally upon it†; which he is far from doing, though it muſt be acknowleged to be a conſideration of great weight. He particularly blames the Archbiſhop for aſcribing this conſent to the nature of the human mind, on which God has impreſſed an innate idea of himſelf; but he owns, that afterwards he ſoftens it by ſaying, that "the human mind is ſo diſpoſed "that men may diſcover in the due uſe of its "faculties, that there is a God‖." And he ſpeaks of ſome divines who explain it thus, that

* Vol. III. p. 247. † *Ib.* p. 258. 267. ‖ *Ib.* 258.

the

the belief of God is founded on a certain natural proportion there is between this great truth, and the conceptions of the human mind. But our author thinks, that "such a *natural and intimate proportion* between the existence of "God, and the conceptions of the human mind, "may appear chimerical, and perhaps is so*." And observes, that "Polytheism was more conformable to the natural conceptions of the "human mind, especially in the most antient "and ignorant ages, than the belief of One "first intelligent Cause, the sole Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things." Yet he afterwards declares, that "the idea of an All-"wise and All-powerful Being, the first cause "of all things, is so *proportionable to human reason*, that it must have been received into the "minds of men, as soon as they began to contemplate the face of nature, and to exercise "their reason in such contemplations†." And in his reflections on Mr. *Maupertuis*, who had slighted the argument from the general consent of mankind, he observes, that "it is general "enough to shew *the proportion which this truth bears to the universal reason of mankind* ‖." You cannot but observe here, that he directly makes use of that manner of expression, which he had before blamed others for using.

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* Vol. III. p. 259. 260. † Vol. IV. p. 195. ‖ *Ib.* p. 256.

LETTER VI. But it will be proper more diſtinctly to inquire into the idea this writer gives of God, and of the divine perfections. The only attributes of God which he inſiſteth upon as neceſſary to be known by us are his power and wiſdom. "We riſe "(ſaith he) from the knowlege of ourſelves, "and of the works of God, to a knowlege of "his exiſtence, and his *wiſdom* and *power*, "which we call infinite*." He blames thoſe "who preſume to define the moral attributes of "an All-perfect Being;" and thinks "we ought "to content ourſelves to know that he exiſts "by the neceſſity of his nature, and that his "*wiſdom* and *power* are infinite†." He declares, that "a ſelf-exiſtent Being, the firſt cauſe "of all things, infinitely *powerful* and infinitely "*wiſe*, is the God of natural theology: That as "the whole ſyſtem of the univerſe bears wit-"neſs to this truth, ſo the whole ſyſtem of na-"tural religion reſts on it, and requires no "broader foundation. Theſe ſyſtems are God's "ſyſtems‖." We ſee here there is no mention made of the divine goodneſs, as included in the idea we form of the Deity. Natural theology or natural religion, requireth no broader a foundation than the acknowleging the wiſdom and power of God. And ſo it generally is in the account our author gives of God and his attributes; as if *optimus* were not to be joined with *maximus* in the Deiſt's creed, or in the idea natural religion teacheth us to form of God. And

* Vol. IV. p. 88. † Vol. V. p. 235. ‖ *Ib.* p. 316.

accord-

accordingly he finds fault with what he calls *artificial theology*, for pretending "to connect "moral attributes, such as we conceive them, "and such as they are relatively to us, with the "physical attributes of God." He says, "there "is no sufficient foundation for this proceeding in the phænomena of nature, and that in "several cases they are repugnant." And he expressly mentions it among the wrong notions of the antient theists, and which gave advantage to the atheists with regard to the question about the original of evil, that they maintained, that "God is just and good, and righteous, and holy, "as well as powerful and wise." He blames them for saying, that "love was the first principle of things, and that it determined God to "bring forth his creatures into existence*;" and that, as *Seneca* says, *usque ad delicias amamur*. And elsewhere quoting a passage of Dr. *Clarke*, in which God is represented as having a *tender and hearty concern for the happiness of man*, he says, "these are strange words to be applied "to the Supreme Being†." And he argueth at great length against those who suppose, that God made man only to be happy. LETTER VI.

He frequently censureth the divines for distinguishing between God's physical and moral attributes: And "cannot see one religious pur-"pose, that this distinction is necessary to an-"swer‡. God's moral attributes (he says) can "only be discerned in the works of God, and

* Vol. V. p. 316, 317. † *Ib.* p. 63. ‡ *Ib.* p. 62.

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" in the conduct of his providence: And that " it is evident, they are not, cannot be ſo " diſcerned in them, as to be the object of our " imitation *." He repreſents it as great preſumption to pretend to deduce our moral obligations from the moral attributes of God; and that the abſurdity of this cannot be too often expoſed †. And after having aſſerted, that " we " cannot riſe from our moral obligations to " God's ſuppoſed moral attributes, he adds, that " he calls them *ſuppoſed*, becauſe after all that " has been ſuppoſed to prove a neceſſary con- " nection between his phyſical and moral attri- " butes, we may obſerve them in his wiſdom; " —and that the effects of his wiſdom give us " ſometimes ideas of thoſe moral qualities, which " we acquire by reflections on ourſelves, and " ſometimes not ‡." He thinks the divines are to be blamed " for talking of God's infinite " goodneſs and juſtice, as of his infinite wiſdom " and power ‖." And obſerves, that " every " thing ſhews the wiſdom and power of God, " conformably to our ideas of wiſdom and " power, in the phyſical world and in the mo- " ral: But every thing does not ſhew in like " manner the juſtice and goodneſs of God, con- " formably to our ideas of thoſe attributes in " either §." That " though the wiſdom of God " does not appear alike in all the phænomena, " yet as far as we can diſcover, it appears in the

* Vol. V. p. 63. † *Ib.* p. 87. ‡ *Ib.* p. 88. ‖ *Ib.* p. 528. § *Ib.* p. 311.

" greateſt

" greateſt and leaſt to our aſtoniſhment, and LETTER VI.
" none of them can be ſtrained into a repug-
" nancy to it——But the ſame cannot be ſaid of
" the moral attributes which we aſcribe to the
" Supreme Being according to our ideas of them,
" ——It cannot be diſputed, and all ſides agree,
" that many of the phænomena are repugnant
" to our ideas of goodneſs and juſtice *. He declares it as his opinion, that " God's natural " attributes abſorb the moral ‡. And particularly, that " the moral attributes of the Supreme " Being are abſorbed in his wiſdom; and that " we ſhould conſider them only as different mo- " difications of this phyſical attribute; and muſt " always talk precariouſly and impertinently, " when we preſume to apply our ideas of them to " the appearances of things ‖." And he chargeth the divines " as proceeding in all their reaſon- " ings about the nature, moral attributes, and " will of God, not only without regard to the " phænomena, but often in direct contradiction " to them †."

This is not a matter that he treats merely in ſome occaſional paſſages. The chief deſign of ſeveral of his fragments and eſſays in his fifth volume, particularly of the fourth, ſeventh, fortieth, forty-firſt, and forty-ninth, is to argue againſt thoſe who aſſert the moral attributes of God as diſtinguiſhed from his phyſical: Or who ſay, That thoſe moral attributes, his holineſs,

* Vol. V. p. 368. ‡ *Ib.* p. 313, 314. ‖ *Ib.* p. 335. 453.
† *Ib.* p. 310.

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goodneſs, juſtice and truth are the ſame in him, that they are in the ideas we form of thoſe perfections; which he ſays, cannot be conceived *without manifeſt preſumption and blaſphemy*: Upon this doctrine he chargeth mens *falſe conceptions, and licentious reaſonings* about the divine nature and providence. He adds, that "theſe *falſe conceptions* and *licentious reaſonings* may proceed likewiſe from the *analogical doctrine*; which though it aſcribes not to God human notions, yet aſcribes to him ſomething, whatever it be, equivalent to them *." He affirms, that "goodneſs and juſtice in God — are ſomething tranſcendent, and of which we cannot make any true judgment; and that it is impoſſible we ſhould argue with any certainty about them †. I ſhall only farther obſerve, that he brings a charge in this reſpect, not only againſt the Chriſtian divines, but againſt the heathen philoſophers. The reaſon he aſſigns, why they were "unable to propagate natural religion, and to reform mankind, is becauſe they proceeded in Dr. *Clarke*'s method to argue *a priori* from the moral attributes of God, his goodneſs, juſtice, *&c.* which they aſſumed to be the ſame in him, that they are in our ideas ‖."

By comparing theſe ſeveral paſſages together it appears, that, according to this writer, we are unable to form any idea of the moral attributes of God: For if we cannot conceive of them according to our ideas, we cannot form any

* Vol. V. p. 541. † *Ib.* p. 311. 359, 360. ‖ *Ib.* p. 234.

any conception of them at all: That it is wrong to diſtinguiſh them from his phyſical attributes, or to ſay they are connected with thoſe attributes: That there is not only no ſuch thing in God as goodneſs or juſtice as we conceive of them, but nothing in him analogous or equivalent to thoſe qualities as they are in us, or which is fitted to produce correſpondent effects: That therefore it ought not to be ſaid of God, that he is juſt and good, holy and true, or that he is a lover of mankind, or is concerned for our happineſs, but only that he is powerful and wiſe: That we can only know God's moral attributes *a poſteriori* from the effects, and that many of the phænomena in nature are repugnant to thoſe attributes, and inconſiſtent with them: So that it is impoſſible for us to argue with any certainty about them. This is the plain intention of the paſſages which have been cited, and others might be produced to the ſame purpoſe: Though we ſhall find him afterwards plainly contradicting ſeveral things which here he hath advanced.

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If we conſider what his reaſon could be for ſetting up an hypotheſis ſo contrary to true Theiſm, for which yet he would be thought to have ſo great a zeal, there are two things which he appears to have had in view.

1. That we are in no caſe to deduce our moral obligations from the moral attributes of God, or to propoſe to imitate God in thoſe attributes. He declares, that "the laws of nature are abſurdly founded in the moral attributes of "God

LETTER VI. "God *;" *i. e.* it is abſurd to talk of his juſtice, goodneſs, righteouſneſs and truth, as giving riſe to thoſe laws, or appearing in the conſtitution of them. And as to the pretence of imitating the Deity in his moral excellencies, this is what he openly and avowedly condemns. This particularly is the deſign of the fourth of his fragments and eſſays in his fifth volume. He expreſly aſſerts, that "God's moral attributes cannot be "ſo diſcerned by us as to be the objects of our "imitation †." He pronounces, that "it is "abſurd, and worſe than abſurd, to aſſert that "man can imitate God, except in a ſenſe ſo very "remote, and ſo improper, that the expreſſions "ſhould never be uſed, much leſs ſuch a duty "recommended ‖." And that "thoſe writers "or preachers who exhort us to imitate God, "muſt mean, not the God whom we ſee in "his works, and in all that his providence or-"ders; but the God who appears in their re-"preſentations of him, and who is often ſuch "a God as no pious theiſt can acknowlege §." He declares for himſelf, that he dares not uſe *theological familiarity, and talk of imitating God;* and treats that doctrine as *extravagant, falſe,* and *profane* ‡. He ſays, that "by aſſum-"ing to imitate God we give the ſtrongeſt proof "of the imperfection of our nature, whilſt we "neglect the real, and aſpire to a mock honour, "as pride, ſeduced by adulation, is prone to

* Vol. V. p. 90. † *Ib.* p. 63. ‖ *Ib.* p. 62. § *Ib.* p. 64. ‡ *Ib.* p. 44. 65.

"do;

" do; and as religious pride, wrought up by LETTER
" ſelf-conceit into enthuſiaſm, does above all VI.
" others*." And he mentions it as an inſtance of the impertinence of *Socrates*'s doctrine, that " he conjured his auditors in the priſon to make " themſelves as like as poſſible to their great " exemplar, the Supreme Being ‖." Thus has this dogmatical and preſumptuous author taken upon him to paſs a ſevere and inſolent cenſure upon that which has been the doctrine of the moſt excellent philoſophers and moraliſts, and of one far ſuperior to them all, our bleſſed Saviour himſelf. See *Matt.* v. 45. 48. *Luke* vi. 35, 36. And he has particularly inſtanced in God's cauſing his ſun to ſhine on the evil and the good, and his ſending rain on the juſt and unjuſt, as a proof that we cannot and ought not to aſpire after an imitation of him §. Though our Lord ſets this goodneſs of providence before us as a noble pattern, to engage us to an extenſive benevolence, and that we ſhould be ready to do good even to our enemies themſelves. There are indeed depths in God's providential diſpenſations with regard to which we cannot pretend to imitate him, for want of knowing the reaſons upon which he proceeds, but this does not hinder, but that we may and ought to endeavour to reſemble him in his illuſtrious moral excellencies, as far as we can diſcern them in his works and in the revelations of his word, which in many inſtances we are able to do.

* Vol. V. p. 67. ‖ Vol. IV. p. 117, 118. § Vol. V. p. 63.

2. Another

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2. Another thing which he hath evidently in view, in denying that we can have any idea of the moral attributes of God, ſo as to make a true judgment of them, or to argue with any certainty about them, is to deſtroy the argument which is drawn from the conſideration of theſe moral attributes, to ſhew the probability of a future ſtate of retributions. For if God be perfectly good and juſt, this leads us to conclude that he will order it ſo, that in the final iſſue of things, a remarkable diſtinction ſhall be made between the righteous the and wicked; and that virtue ſhall upon the whole be crowned with its due reward, and vice meet with condign puniſhment: and ſince this is not uniformly done in this preſent ſtate, it is reaſonable to believe that there ſhall be a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments. This is a way of arguing, which, by his own acknowlegement, has been urged by ſome of the beſt and wiſeſt men in all ages. To avoid this conſequence, he will not allow that there is any ſuch thing as juſtice and goodneſs in God according to our ideas, or any thing anſwering to what we call juſtice and goodneſs: and that it is preſumption in us to determine what thoſe attributes require that God ſhould do*. And indeed to guard againſt this ſeems to have been a principal point with his lordſhip. It is for this that he denies, that Providence extendeth his care to the individuals of the human race. And one of his chief prejudices againſt the Chriſtian

* Vol. V. p. 453.

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revelation appears to me to be its ſetting theſe things in ſo ſtrong a light. LETTER VI.

You eaſily perceive that this part of our author's ſcheme is not of a trifling nature. It is not a mere ſpeculative error, but which, purſued to its proper conſequences, muſt have a mighty influence on religion and morals. I ſhall therefore examine it diſtinctly; and ſhall firſt offer ſome general conſiderations concerning God's moral attributes, to ſhew that they muſt neceſſarily be aſcribed to the ſupreme Being: And then ſhall proceed to obviate the principal objections he hath advanced: After which I ſhall point to the manifold inconſiſtencies and contradictions he hath fallen into in relation to this ſubject.

I ſhall begin with ſome general conſiderations concerning God's moral attributes.

And 1. It is eſſential to the idea of God, that he is the *all-perfect* Being. So our author frequently calls him, and makes it neceſſary for us to regard him under that notion*. That is a remarkable declaration which he makes Vol. III. p. 299, "I know, for I can demonſtrate by connecting the cleareſt and moſt diſtinct of my "real ideas, that there is a God, a firſt intelligent "cauſe of all things, whoſe infinite wiſdom and "power appear evidently in all his works, and "to whom therefore I aſcribe moſt rationally "every other perfection, whether conceivable "or not conceivable by me." Here he men-

* Vol. III. p. 253.

tions

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tions diſtinctly, as his manner is, God's *infinite wiſdom and power*, and takes no particular notice of his goodneſs. But ſurely this muſt be ſuppoſed to be included, when he adds, that not only wiſdom and power, but *every other perfection conceivable by us* muſt be moſt rationally aſcribed to God. For is not goodneſs a perfection? And is it not conceivable by us? Yea, is it not the moſt amiable of all perfections, and that which gives a luſtre and glory to all the reſt? Is it poſſible to conceive a perfect character without it? Almighty power and infinite wiſdom, if they could be ſuppoſed ſeparated from goodneſs and righteouſneſs, in the great Governor of the world, would create horror and averſion inſtead of love and eſteem. A God deſtitute of juſtice and goodneſs would be ſuch a God, as he moſt wrongfully repreſents the God of *Moſes* and St. *Paul* to be, an unjuſt, a cruel, a partial and arbitrary Being *.

He is ſenſible that in our ideas of perfection, goodneſs and righteouſneſs, or his moral attributes, are neceſſarily included: and that conſequently according to the rule he had laid down, *viz.* that it is *rational* for us to aſcribe to God every perfection, whether *conceivable* or *unconceivable by us*, we ought moſt certainly to aſcribe to him righteouſneſs, goodneſs and truth. He endeavours therefore to guard againſt this by ſaying, though in plain contradiction to what he had before advanced.—" Let us not meaſure his

* Vol. V. p. 567.

" per-

" perfections by ours. Let us not preſume LETTER
" ſo much as to aſcribe our perfections to him, VI.
" even according to the higheſt conceptions we
" are able to form of them; though we reject
" every imperfection conceivable by us, when
" it is imputed to him ‡". He obſerves, that
" the firſt and ſtrongeſt impreſſions that we re-
" ceive of benevolence, juſtice, and other moral
" virtues, come from reflexions on ourſelves
" and others; from what we feel in ourſelves,
" and from what we obſerve in other men.
" Theſe we acknowlege to be, however limited
" and imperfect, the excellencies of our own
" nature, and therefore conceiving them with-
" out any limitation or imperfection, we aſcribe
" them to the Divine." But he ſays, " a very
" ſhort analyſis of the excellencies of our own
" nature will be ſufficient to ſhew, that they
" cannot be applied from man to God without
" profaneneſs, nor from God to man without
" the moſt ſhameful abſurdity *." It will be eaſily acknowleged, that we cannot aſcribe any of thoſe qualities in our nature, which neceſſarily connote imperfection, to God in a literal and proper ſenſe; but to ſay that we ought not to aſcribe thoſe, which we cannot but look upon as the nobleſt excellencies and perfections of an intelligent Being, and of which we clearly diſcern the traces and reſemblances in our own nature, to the infinitely perfect Being, at the ſame time taking care to remove every imperfection with which they are attended in us and our fellow-

‡ Vol. III. p. 558. * Vol. V. 88, 89.

creatures,

LETTER VI. creatures, is highly abſurd, and a manifeſt contradiction to the common ſenſe of mankind. It is to ſay, that we are to conceive of God as the infinitely perfect Being, and yet we are not to aſcribe to him thoſe excellencies which we cannot poſſibly avoid regarding as neceſſarily included in the idea of an infinite perfection. Nor is this, as he is pleaſed to repreſent it, a making man the *original*, and God only a *copy*; * or, as he elſewhere expreſſeth it, a ſuppoſing God to be no more than an *infinite man* †. This argument, if it may be called ſo, is only a playing upon words. The word *man* carries in it the idea of a finite, imperfect, created being. And therefore to call God an infinite man has a very odd ſound. But if the meaning only be, that as man is an intelligent being, ſo God is infinite intelligence; and as man has moral diſpoſitions, the imperfect ſeeds and principles of goodneſs, juſtneſs, benevolence, God hath all theſe in the higheſt poſſible degree of eminency, without any imperfection and defect; what is there in this unworthy of the ſupreme and abſolutely perfect Being? It is true that, as he obſerves, *we do not know the manner of his being* ‖, but as this by his own acknowlegement is no argument againſt aſcribing to him wiſdom and power, ſo neither is it againſt our aſcribing to him juſtice and goodneſs. He there aſſerts, that "we riſe from the knowlege "of ourſelves, and of the other works of God, "to a knowlege of his exiſtence, and of his wiſ-

* Vol. V. p. 87. † *Ib.* p. 316. ‖ *Ib.* p. 88.

"dom

"dom and power which we call infinite." And may it not equally be ſaid, that we riſe from the conſideration of his works, and the illuſtrious diſplays of beneficent goodneſs to be found there, and from the knowlege of the moral ſentiments in our own breaſts, and which we cannot but approve, to the knowlege of his goodneſs, and moral excellencies? And ſince, by the very conſtitution of our minds, we cannot help regarding them as perfections, we are naturally led to aſcribe them in the ſupreme degree to the *all-perfect* Being. And to ſay, that when we do ſo, we make ourſelves the original, and him only the copy, is a ſtrange miſrepreſentation. For in that caſe we riſe from the imperfect traces and lineaments of thoſe excellencies in our own ſouls, or which we diſcern in others, to the ſupreme goodneſs and benevolence, of which all human and created goodneſs is but a very faint and imperfect copy. And what can be more reaſonable, than to conclude that he muſt be infinitely good and juſt, and true, who made us capable of diſcerning and feeling the amiableneſs and excellency of thoſe moral diſpoſitions and qualities; and who hath ſpread ſuch beauty and order, and ſuch a profuſion of bleſſings throughout this vaſt ſyſtem? LETTER VI.

Again, the moral attributes of God may be farther argued from this, that they are really inſeparable from infinite wiſdom and intelligence: And ſince wiſdom could not be perfect without goodneſs and juſtice, theſe moral attributes muſt

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be aſcribed to the ſupreme Being as well as wiſdom, which our author every-where aſcribes to him. We may as reaſonably ſuppoſe him without the one as the other. As there are innumerable things which ſhew his wiſdom, ſo there are which demonſtrate his goodneſs and benignity. And if there are ſeveral appearances which we find it hard to reconcile to our ideas of goodneſs, ſo there are which ſeem not to be conſiſtent with wiſdom. And the anſwer is the ſame in both caſes, that it is owing to our ignorance, and the narrowneſs of our views. And we ſhall ſoon find our author in effect acknowleging this. Power and wiſdom without goodneſs and righteouſneſs are ſo far from giving us a proper idea of an all-perfect Being, that it is the idea of a very imperfect one. This writer himſelf obſerves, that "if God be infinitely wiſe, he "always knows and always does that which is "fitteſt to be done: To chuſe the beſt end, and "to proportion the means to it, is the very de"finition of wiſdom*." And accordingly he aſſerts, that the wiſdom of God always determineth him to do that *which is fitteſt upon the whole.* And this neceſſarily ſuppoſeth an univerſal rectitude of his nature. It includes both a perfect unerring knowlege of what is fitteſt and beſt, and a diſpoſition and determination to act accordingly, and to do what is, all things conſidered, beſt and fitteſt to be done. And this is really to acknowlege God's moral attributes.

* Vol. V. p. 332.

For,

For, as our author obſerves, "that which is "fitteſt to be done is always juſt and good §." So that God's wiſdom is neceſſarily ſuppoſed to be connected with his juſtice and goodneſs, as well as they with his wiſdom; and a regard to both is comprehended in chuſing what is fitteſt to be done. Wiſdom ſeparated from juſtice and goodneſs would not be true wiſdom, which always includes the worthieſt ends and propereſt means, but Craft, which is not a real perfection, but the contrary. LETTER VI.

This writer ſhews that he is ſenſible of this, when he aſſerts, that God's moral attributes are only "different modifications of his wiſdom; "and are barely names that we give to various "manifeſtations of the infinite wiſdom of one "ſimple uncompounded Being". And he blames the divines for ſuppoſing that "they are in him, "what they are in us, diſtinct affections, diſpo-"ſitions and habitudes *." He ſays, that "after "all that has been ſaid to prove a neceſſary con-"nexion between his phyſical and moral at-"tributes, we may obſerve them in his wiſdom ‖." And that "if they are ſo intimately connected "with his power and wiſdom, and ſo much the "ſame in nature, that they cannot be ſeparated "in the exerciſe of them, in this caſe his natural "attributes abſorb the moral †." But what are we to underſtand by abſorb? May they not be intimately connected, and yet be of diſtinct conſideration? Are not the divine power and

§ Vol. V. p. 313. * *Ib.* p. 335. ‖ *Ib.* p. 88. † *Ib.* p. 313.

LETTER VI. wiſdom intimately connected? Can they ever be ſeparated in the exerciſe? Is his power ever a blind power, deſtitute of wiſdom and intelligence? Or, is his wiſdom an impotent wiſdom, deſtitute of power? Yet he owns the ideas of power and wiſdom in God to be diſtinct, though they are neither of them really diſtinguiſhed from his eſſence. He is indeed pleaſed to paſs a cenſure upon the divines for *parcelling out a divine moral nature into various attributes like the human* ‡. And he ſometimes ſeems to find fault with the diſtinguiſhing any attributes at all in God. He ſays, that "ſince the wiſdom of God is as "much God as the will of God, and the will "as the wiſdom, it is abſurd to diſtinguiſh "them: That it is ſomething worſe to reaſon "about the divine, as we do about the hu-"man intellect, and to divide and parcel out "the former upon the plan of the latter. Since "the will of God is not like that of man, "dark and liable to be ſeduced, why are we "led to conclude that a ſuperior faculty is "neceſſary to determine it, as the judgment "of reaſon does, or ſhould, determine that of "man?" Yet he immediately after diſtinguiſhes between the *will* and *knowlege* of God, and ſuppoſes it neceſſary to diſtinguiſh them *to be* (as he expreſſes it) a *little more intelligible* §. and elſewhere he talks of the *rule which infinite wiſdom preſcribes to infinite power* †. And all-along throughout his eſſays he ſpeaks

‡ Vol. V. p. 453. § *Ib.* p. 5. † Vol. III. p. 53.

of

of wiſdom and power as diſtinct attributes of God. The one therefore does not, to uſe his expreſſion, *abſorb* the other, though they are not ſeparated in the exerciſe. This ſhews that perfections may be intimately connected without being abſorbed, or, in other words, confounded one with another. And therefore it is no argument that there are no ſuch diſtinct attributes as juſtice or righteouſneſs and goodneſs, becauſe they are intimately and inſeparably connected with his power and wiſdom. On the contrary, this ſuppoſes that there are ſuch attributes. For it would be abſurd to talk of their being connected with his wiſdom, or of their being to be *obſerved* in his wiſdom, if there were no ſuch qualities, or attributes. And ſince, as Lord *Bolingbroke* himſelf elſewhere acknowlegeth, *we muſt ſpeak of God, after the manner of men* *, if we ſpeak of theſe qualities at all, we muſt ſpeak of them as diſtinct attributes. LETTER VI.

Let us now conſider our author's objections.

1. He urges, that "the moral as well as phyſical attributes of God can only be known "*a poſteriori*. They muſt be diſcerned in the "works of God, and in the conduct of Providence. And it is evident they are not, cannot "be ſo diſcerned in them, as to be the objects of our imitation †." "Every thing "ſhews the power and wiſdom of God conformably to our ideas of wiſdom and power

* Vol. V. p. 468. † *Ib.* p. 63.

LETTER VI. " in the phyſical world and in the moral, but " every thing does not ſhew in like manner " the juſtice and goodneſs of God, conformably " to our ideas of theſe attributes in either *. " None of the phenomena can be ſtrained into " a repugnancy to the divine wiſdom, but it " cannot be diſputed, that many of them are " repugnant to our ideas of goodneſs and ju- " ſtice †." Some other paſſages to the ſame purpoſe were mentioned above, which I need not here repeat. In oppoſition to this it may be obſerved, that, as was before hinted, the characters of goodneſs and benignity are conſpicuous in the conſtitution of things, as well as of wiſdom and power. And if there are ſeveral particular phenomena not conformable to our ideas of goodneſs and righteouſneſs, there are alſo ſeveral appearances not conformable to our ideas of wiſdom; and the reaſons and deſigns of which do not appear. It is well known, that many are the objections which the atheiſts have made againſt the wiſdom of God, as appearing in the conſtitution both of the natural and moral world. It is his own obſervation, that " we muſt be pre- " pared to meet with ſeveral appearances, which " we cannot explain, nor therefore reconcile " to the ideas we endeavour to form of the di- " vine perfection. If it be true, that infinite " wiſdom and power created and govern the " univerſe, it cannot but follow that ſome of " the phenomena may be proportionable, and

* Vol. V. p. 311. † *Ib.* p. 368.

" that

" that others muſt be diſproportionable to our and LETTER
" to every other finite underſtanding *." He VI.
very properly expoſes the abſurdity of the atheiſts in arguing againſt the exiſtence, attributes, and providence of God, from the difficulties relating to them. And obſerves, that " theſe dif-
" ficulties do not embarraſs the theiſt——And
" inſtead of being ſurprized to find them, he
" would be ſurprized not to find them——That
" there muſt be many phenomena both phyſical
" and moral, for which he can, and for which
" he cannot account——And that there are
" ſecrets of the divine nature and œconomy,
" which human reaſon cannot penetrate †."
The difficulties therefore relating to the divine goodneſs are no reaſon for not acknowleging that goodneſs, any more than the difficulties relating to the divine wiſdom are a good reaſon againſt acknowleging the wiſdom of God. We may here apply his own way of arguing. " The power of executing (ſays he) is ſeen in
" every inſtance; and though we cannot diſcern
" the wiſdom of contrivance and direction in
" every inſtance, yet we ſee them in ſo many,
" that it becomes the higheſt abſurdity not to
" acknowlege them in all." And he takes notice of the folly of atheiſts in objecting againſt it, whereby they only ſhew their own ignorance. —— He adds, that " the wiſdom of
" God is not ſo often diſcernible by us as the
" power of God, nor the goodneſs as the wiſ-

* Vol. V. p. 365. † Vol. III. p. 186, 187.

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" dom. But a multitude of the phenomena be-
" ing conformable *to our ideas of goodneſs*, we
" may reaſon about it as we did juſt now about
" the divine wiſdom*;" *i. e.* that though we cannot diſcern the goodneſs of God according to our ideas in every thing, yet we ſee it in ſo many, that it would be the higheſt abſurdity not to acknowlege it in all, where he ſeems to me plainly to give up the point, and to aſſert that we ought to acknowlege the goodneſs of God, even according to our ideas of goodneſs, as well as his wiſdom, to be an attribute belonging to the Supreme Being: And that this may be juſtly argued from his works.

But let us proceed to conſider ſome other of his objections:

He argues againſt aſcribing moral attributes, or the excellencies of our nature to God, becauſe we cannot aſcribe to him fortitude and temperance. He asketh " How can we deduce
" fortitude from the attributes of God, or aſcribe
" this virtue to him, who can endure no pain,
" nor be expoſed to any danger? How tempe-
" rance, when it would be the moſt horrid blaſ-
" phemy, to ſuppoſe him ſubject to any human
" appetites and paſſions, and much more to
" ſome ſo inordinate as to require a particular
" virtue to reſtrain and govern them? I might
" bring many more inſtances of the ſame kind.
" But he who will not be convinced by theſe,
" how abſurdly the laws of nature are founded

* Vol. V. p. 335.

" by

" by ſome writers in the moral attributes of " God, will be convinced by none *." He ſeems to have a good opinion of this way of arguing, for he urges it more than once ‡. But though fortitude, as it ſignifies a bearing up under evils and ſufferings, and temperance, as it ſignifies the reſtraining and governing the appetites and paſſions, cannot be properly aſcribed to God, becauſe they neceſſarily connote the being liable to evils and imperfections, it doth not follow that therefore righteouſneſs and goodneſs, and univerſal benevolence, which imply no ſuch imperfection, and are the nobleſt excellencies of an intelligent nature, that we can poſſibly conceive, may not be applied to the Supreme and Abſolutely-perfect Being: And as to fortitude and temperance, though they cannot be properly aſcribed to God, no more than piety and ſubmiſſion and reſignation to the divine will, which are eminent human virtues; yet they are the objects of the divine approbation, and our obligation to them may be juſtly argued and deduced from God's moral attributes, from his holineſs and the rectitude of his nature, which cauſeth him to delight in moral beauty and order, and to require that his reaſonable creatures ſhould act in a manner becoming the excellent faculties he hath given them; and that they ſhould maintain that temper and conduct which tendeth to the true perfection

LETTER VI.

* Vol. V. p. 90. ‡ *Ib.* p. 311.

LETTER VI. fection and happineſs of their natures, which theſe virtues manifeſtly do.

He farther objects, that "our ideas of the "divine attributes muſt neceſſarily be inade- "quate, both on account of the infinite di- "ſtance between the divine and human nature; "and on account of the numberleſs and to us "unknown relations, reſpectively to all which "the divine providence acts; which, if we did "know them, we ſhould be unable to com- "pare, and in which, therefore, the harmony of "the divine perfections would not be diſcern- "ible by us——That therefore we are very "incompetent judges of the moral attributes of "God, and of what they require God ſhould "do in the government of the world.——Nor "can we make any true judgment, or argue with "any certainty about them," as he endeavours to prove from the authority of St. *Paul*, and Dr. *Barrow* *. This only proves what will be eaſily allowed, that we cannot comprehend or ſee the whole extent of the divine proceedings; and that he may in many caſes have reaſons for his proceedings which we are not acquainted with; but does not prove, that there is no ſuch thing as goodneſs or righteouſneſs in God according to our ideas of them, nor any thing equivalent to them; or that we can in no caſe argue from what his goodneſs and righteouſneſs require, nor judge of the equity of his proceedings. Although the Scriptures often ſpeak of

* Vol. V. p. 359. 362.

God's

God's ways of providence as above human comprehenſion, yet they alſo repreſent him as ſometimes appealing to men themſelves concerning the equity of his proceedings. Our author indeed repreſents this as an abſurdity, but he does not prove it ſo, or ſhew that there is any thing in it unworthy of the moſt wiſe and righteous and benevolent Governor of the world. Will it follow, that becauſe there are ſome difficult caſes concerning which we cannot judge, that therefore we cannot judge in any caſe at all? We may in ſome caſes ſafely argue from our ideas of the divine goodneſs and juſtice; *e. g.* that he will order it ſo, that a remarkable difference ſhall be made upon the whole between good and bad men; and that virtue ſhall be rewarded, and vice and wickedneſs puniſhed. Will any man ſay, that we cannot ſafely conclude from the goodneſs and juſtice of the Supreme Being, that he will not ſuffer or appoint an innocent creature to be eternally miſerable? He obſerves, ſpeaking of God's knowlege, power, and wiſdom, that "though we cannot frame "full and adequate ideas of them, it will not "follow that we have, properly ſpeaking, no "knowlege at all of his attributes, nor of the "manner in which they are exerciſed——That "our ideas of divine intelligence and wiſdom, "may be neither fantaſtic nor falſe, and yet "God's manner of knowing may be very dif"ferent from ours*." In like manner it may

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* Vol. V. P. 524, 525.

be

LETTER VI. be ſaid concerning God's moral attributes, his juſtice and goodneſs, that though we cannot frame full and adequate ideas of them, it will not follow that we have, properly ſpeaking, no knowlege of them at all, and of the manner in which they are exerciſed. Our ideas of them are neither falſe nor fantaſtic, though in many inſtances they may be exerciſed in a way different from our apprehenſion. To this may be applied what he ſaith againſt Archbiſhop *King*, that "though we have not a direct knowlege of "the nature of God by archetypal ideas, yet we "are not reduced to know nothing of him ex- "cept by analogy. It is a real knowlege, and "may be ſaid to be direct, if we may be allowed "to call any knowlege by demonſtration di- "rect*."

Another argument urged by this writer to ſhew, that the divines are in the wrong to talk of God's infinite goodneſs and juſtice as of his wiſdom and power, is this; that "the latter "preſerve their nature without any conceivable "bounds, and the former muſt ceaſe to be what "they are, unleſs we conceive them bounded. "Their nature implies neceſſarily a limitation "in the exerciſe of them ‖." In anſwer to this, it may be obſerved, that God's wiſdom and power conſidered in themſelves, and as they are in God, are infinite, ſo alſo are his goodneſs and juſtice. But conſidered relatively in the exerciſe of them as terminated in the creature, the

* Vol. V. p. 529. ‖ *Ib.* p. 528.

one

one may be ſaid to be limited as well as the other; *i. e.* the effects of neither of them are properly infinite. Infinite power and wiſdom, as exerciſed on the creature, produce finite and limited effects, ſo doth infinite goodneſs and juſtice. But ſtill conſidered as qualities and attributes of the divine eſſence, they are infinite, of an eminent and tranſcendent nature, and would be really in God, though there were no creature formed. He did not begin to be good, when the creatures began to exiſt, though then the exerciſe of goodneſs, under the direction of his wiſdom, reſpecting the creatures, began. LETTER VI.

His other objections proceed all upon a groſs miſrepreſentation of the ſentiments of thoſe whom he hath thought fit to oppoſe. He chargeth Dr. *Clarke* with aſſerting, that juſtice and goodneſs, and the reſt of the moral attributes, are in God juſt what they are in our *imperfect, unſteady, complex ideas*; and that the rule according to which God exerciſeth thoſe attributes, *viz.* the nature and reaſon of things, is obvious to the underſtanding of all intelligent beings *. This is not true, if underſtood of the whole nature and reaſon of things in all its vaſt extent: Nor has that learned divine any-where aſſerted that it is ſo.

Again, he repreſents the divines as aſſerting, that "the will of God is not determined by the "harmonious concurrence of all his attributes," and that "his goodneſs and juſtice do not act in

* Vol. V. p. 252.

"*a con-*

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"*a concurrence with his wiſdom* *." He charges them with maintaining, that "goodneſs in God is the only directing and governing principle, and not wiſdom: And that "wiſdom ought to contrive and power to execute under this direction." And he argues, that "if it were ſo, the happineſs of man "ought to be proportionable to the goodneſs "of God, that is, infinite." And in oppoſition to this he aſſerts, that "wiſdom ought to be "deemed the directing principle of divine conduct †." Nor will any divine deny that wiſdom is the directing principle. They all plead for the harmonious concurrence of the divine attributes, though they are not for confounding thoſe attributes. Goodneſs in God is not to be regarded as a blind inſtinct, which neceſſarily acteth at all times, and in every inſtance, to the utmoſt extent of its capacity, and to the higheſt poſſible degree; but as a moſt wiſe goodneſs, *i. e.* a goodneſs which is always in conjunction with, and under the direction of infinite wiſdom. For goodneſs without diſtinction or diſcernment could ſcarce be accounted a virtue or a perfection. Such a notion of the divine goodneſs would be diſhonourable to God, and of ill conſequence to the intereſts of religion and virtue in the world. But his goodneſs is that of a moſt holy and underſtanding mind, and is always exerciſed in ſuch a way as ſeemeth moſt fit to his infinite wiſdom, which governeth

* Vol. V. p. 313, 342. † *Ib.* p. 341.

the outward effects of it, and appointeth when, where, and how, it shall be communicated. We are not merely to fix our views on goodness and benevolence, in considering what God may do or may not do with regard to the happiness of his creatures; but to take in every consideration, that of his wisdom, his justice, his holiness and righteousness, and the majesty of his government. LETTER VI.

He frequently accuseth the divines, and even the ancient theists, for supposing that God made man for this end to communicate happiness to him. But then that he may more effectually expose this notion, he claps in the word *only*, as if they maintained, that God had no other end in view in creating man, but to make him happy to the utmost possible degree, to give him an *happiness without allay*, as he expresseth it, and to *make him not only moderately, but immoderately happy in the world* *. It is thus that he thinks fit to represent their sense. And he says, This is an *hypothesis which the phenomena contradict* †. But though it cannot reasonably be denied, that according to the best conceptions we can form, one principal motive in God's making reasonable beings, was to communicate happiness to them, yet I think we do not know enough of God, nor have a sufficiently comprehensive view of things, and of the reasons an infinite mind might have for his proceedings, to pronounce confidently, that he had, and could

* Vol. V. p. 345, 392, 421. † *Ib.* p. 345.

have,

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have, no other reaſon or motive. It may well be ſuppoſed, that in bringing this vaſt univerſe and the various orders of beings in it into exiſtence, he had in view the exerciſe and diſplay of his own glorious perfections, not merely of any one but of all his perfections, his majeſty and greatneſs, his wiſdom, power, holineſs, and goodneſs, in conjunction. This is an end worthy of God, as far as he can be ſaid to propoſe an end to himſelf. And when it is ſaid, that he made his reaſonable creatures with a deſign to communicate happineſs to them, it muſt be underſtood thus, that he had it in view to make them happy, in ſuch a way, in ſuch meaſures and degrees, in ſuch times, ſeaſons, and proportions, as ſhould ſeem fit to his infinite wiſdom, and ſhould be moſt worthy of him, and becoming his own glorious perfections. His end in creating them was not abſolutely to make every individual of them happy at all events, however they ſhould behave, but conditionally to make them happy in the right uſe and improvement of their own powers, and in ſuch a way as is conſiſtent with moral agency and government, and becoming his own infinite wiſdom, goodneſs, righteouſneſs, and purity.

It is farther with a view to expoſe the doctrine of the divines relating to the goodneſs of God, that he repreſents it as their general ſentiment, that all things were made merely for the ſake of man; that this vaſt univerſal ſyſtem was formed for him alone: And he ſets himſelf to ſhew,

as

as he might eaſily do, the abſurdity of ſuppoſing the whole univerſe to have been made merely for ſome minute part of it *. This particularly is the ſubject of the 45th and 46th of his fragments and eſſays. But it is obſervable, that he himſelf, after having abuſed the divines for ſuppoſing that God made man to communicate happineſs to him, expreſly aſſerts, that "God "has made us happy, and has put it into our "power to make ourſelves happier by a due uſe "of our reaſon, which leads us to the practice "of moral virtue, and all the duties of ſo-"ciety †." "That we are obliged to our "Creator for a certain rule, and ſufficient means "of arriving at happineſs, and have none to "blame but ourſelves, when we fail of it ‡." "That God made us to be happy here — He "may make us happier in another ſyſtem of "being.——That there is even in this world "much more good than evil, and the preſent "ſtate of mankind is happy in it §." "And "that the end of the human ſtate is human "happineſs ‖."

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You are, I doubt not, by this time prepared for what I propoſed to ſhew in the laſt place, the contradictions and inconſiſtencies our author hath fallen into in treating of this ſubject. I ſuppoſe you to bear in mind the ſevere cenſures he hath paſſed upon the divines for pretending to connect the phyſical and moral attributes of

* Vol. V. p. 330. † *Ib.* p. 384. ‡ *Ib.* p. 388.
§ *Ib.* p. 391, 392. ‖ *Ib.* p. 544.

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God, and for aſcribing to him moral attributes, juſtice and goodneſs, according to our ideas. And now I deſire you to compare the paſſages already produced with thoſe that follow.

God ſhews us our duty, "by which we ſtand "in the relation of ſubjects and ſervants to a "gracious and beneficent Lord and Maſter, "who gave us laws neither captious nor ambi- "guous, and who commands us nothing which "it is not our intereſt to perform *." He here ſuppoſes it to be a thing evident from the law of nature, that we ſtand in a relation to God as our *gracious and beneficent Lord and Maſter*, who has our intereſt and happineſs in view in the very laws which he injoins. And is not this plainly to aſcribe goodneſs to him, even according to our ideas of goodneſs? And elſewhere he repreſents it, as if we could not ask more of a *beneficent Creator*, than he hath done for us †. He ſays, "The Theiſt acknowleges whatever "God has done to be juſt and good in itſelf, "though it does not appear ſuch in every in- "ſtance, conformably to his ideas of juſtice "and goodneſs. He imputes the difference to "the defect of his ideas, and not to any defect "of the divine attributes.——Where he ſees "them, he owns them explicitly; where he "does not ſee them, he pronounces nothing "about them. He is as far from denying them," (*i. e.* from denying the juſtice and goodneſs of God) "as he is from denying the wiſdom and

* Vol. V. p. 97. † *Ib.* p. 481.

"power

"power of God *." The most orthodox di- LETTER
vine could hardly express himself more fully VI.
on this head, than Lord *Bolingbroke* has here done. To the same purpose he introduces a meditation or soliloquy of a sincere and devout Theist, in which he represents him as saying, among other things, "Man enjoys numberless "benefits by the fitness of his nature to this "constitution, unasked, unmerited, freely be- "stowed. The *wisdom and goodness* of God "are therefore manifest. May I enjoy thank- "fully the benefits bestowed on me by the di- "vine liberality: may I receive the evils to "which I am exposed patiently, nay wil- "lingly †."

But what deserves particularly to be remarked is, that whereas he represents the ascribing goodness and justice to God according to our ideas, to be what gives great advantage to the Atheists with regard to the original of evil; as if he thought it impossible to reconcile the evil that is in the world with God's moral attributes, and the supposition of his being good and righteous and holy as well as powerful and wise; he has taken great pains to confute his own arguments. For not a few of his fragments and essays in his fifth volume are taken up in endeavouring to remove and answer that objection, and to shew that the evil there is in the present constitution of things in this world, is reconcilable to the

* Vol. V. p. 311, 312. † *Ib.* p. 338, 339.—See also l. III. p. 358.

LETTER VI. juſtice and goodneſs of God, even according to the ideas we form of them *. He undertakes to defend the *goodneſs* of God againſt the Atheiſts and divines †. And having, as he pretends, done this, he proceeds to vindicate the *juſtice* and *righteouſneſs* of God *againſt the ſame confederates* ‡. Thus the ſame author, who had uſed his utmoſt efforts to ſhew, in oppoſition to the divines, that moral attributes, particularly juſtice and goodneſs, ought not to be aſcribed to God according to the ideas we conceive of them, and that we cannot form any judgment concerning them, takes upon him afterwards to vindicate thoſe very attributes againſt the divines, who, he pretends, are for deſtroying them. So ſtrangely inconſiſtent is this writer's ſcheme, that on the one hand, with a view to invalidate the argument for a ſtate of future retributions drawn from the moral attributes of God, he endeavours to take away thoſe attributes, or confound them with the phyſical, and to ſhew that there is no ſuch thing as goodneſs or juſtice in God according to our ideas, nor any thing equivalent to them; and that the phenomena are repugnant to thoſe attributes: And on the other hand, with the ſame view of weakening or deſtroying the argument for a future ſtate from thoſe attributes, he ſets himſelf to prove that the preſent ſtate of things is ſufficiently conformable to our ideas

* See Vol. V. Frag. 43, 44, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54.
† Vol. V. p. 335. ‡ *Ib.* p. 393.

of

of the divine juſtice and goodneſs, and that theſe attributes are ſo fully exerciſed or diſplayed here, that there is no need for any further manifeſtation or diſplay of them hereafter. LETTER VI.

I ſhall only produce one paſſage more, and it is a very remarkable one. Towards the concluſion of his laſt volume, when he pretends to draw a line of ſeparation between natural and artificial theology, he obſerves that by that, *viz.* natural theology, "we are taught to acknowlege and adore the infinite wiſdom and power of God, manifeſted in every part of his creation, and aſcribe *goodneſs* and *juſtice* to him where-ever he intended that we ſhould ſo aſcribe them, that is, where-ever either his works, or the diſpenſations of his providence, do as neceſſarily communicate theſe notions to our minds, as thoſe of wiſdom and power are communicated to us in the whole extent of both. Where-ever they are not ſo communicated, we may aſſume very reaſonably, that it is on motives ſtrictly conformable to all the divine attributes, and therefore to goodneſs and juſtice, though unknown to us, from whom ſo many circumſtances, with a relation to which the divine providence acts, muſt be often concealed: or, we may reſolve all into the wiſdom of God, and not preſume to account for them morally *." The laſt part of this paſſage hath a reference to his ſcheme of reſolving all into the divine wiſdom.

* Vol. V. p. 527.

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But you cannot but obſerve here, that after his repeated invectives againſt the divines, and againſt artificial theology, for aſcribing moral attributes to God, juſtice and goodneſs, according to our ideas of them, he has in effect here acknowleged all that the divines themſelves teach. They believe, that God is always good and juſt, though they do not pretend to account for the exerciſe of goodneſs and juſtice in every particular inſtance: But that enough we know to convince us of both: The notions of which, this writer himſelf here owns to be in many inſtances, at leaſt, neceſſarily communicated to us from his works: And ſurely then we ſhould endeavour to reſemble him in theſe his moral perfections, as far as we know them.

Before I conclude this letter, I ſhall take ſome notice, becauſe I ſhall not afterwards have ſo proper an opportunity for it, of what he hath obſerved concerning eternal ideas in God, and concerning the eternal reaſons and fitneſſes of things.

He finds great fault with Dr. *Cudworth*, Dr. *Clarke*, and others, for talking of ideas in God, as if they ſuppoſed his manner of knowing to be exactly the ſame with ours; which certainly was far from their intention. He pronounces, that "the "doctrine of eternal ideas in the divine mind "has been much abuſed by thoſe who are on "the delirium of metaphyſical theology. It "cannot be underſtood in a literal ſenſe. And "he thinks ſuch a way of talking is profane as

"well

" well as presumptuous; and that it is silly too, LETTER VI.
" and mere cant *." He has several observations, which are for the most part very just, to shew that God's manner of knowing is very different from ours, and that he does not know by the help or intervention of ideas as we do †. I need not take particular notice of those observations, which contain little in them, that will not be acknowleged by those whom he has thought fit to oppose. The rash and improper use of the word ideas, as applied to God, hath no doubt led to mistakes, and to wrong and unwarrantable ways of expression: As any one must be convinced, that knows what contentions there have been in the schools about the divine ideas, which have given rise to arrogant and foolish questions, scarce consistent with the veneration that is due to the supreme incomprehensible Being. Yet the modest use of that expression is not to be too rigidly censured. Our author himself, who blames it so much in others, hath on several occasions fallen into the same manner of expression himself. Thus he observes, that " it might be determined in the *di-*
" *vine ideas*, that there should be a gradation
" of life and intellect throughout the uni-
" verse ‡." And he repeats it again, that this
" appeared necessary or fit in *the divine ideas*,
" that is, to speak more rationally, to the su-
" preme divine reason or intention §." Where

* Vol. III. p. 356. † *Ib.* p. 355, 356, 357. Vol. V. p. 35, 36, 37, 38. ‡ *Ib.* p. 337. § *Ib.* p. 365.

LETTER VI. he uſeth the term *divine ideas* as equivalent to the *divine reaſon and intention*, though he thinks the latter more proper. He elſewhere declares, that "the ideas of God, if we may "aſcribe ideas to him, no more than his ways, "are thoſe of man *." And in one of his moſt celebrated pieces publiſhed in his own life-time, he ſaith, that "God in his *eternal ideas*, "for we are able to conceive no other manner "of knowing, has preſcribed to himſelf that rule "by which he governs the univerſe he creat-"ed †." Here he not only aſcribes ideas to God, but *eternal ideas*, by which God hath preſcribed to himſelf a rule for his governing the world. This rule he there explaineth to be "a fitneſs ariſing from the various natures, and "more various relations of things, in the ſyſtem "which he hath conſtituted." Which fitneſs he there ſuppoſeth to have been known to God in his *eternal ideas*. And yet he hath frequently inveighed againſt Dr. *Clarke*, for ſpeaking of the eternal reaſons and relations of things. This particularly is the ſubject of the ſecond, fifty-eighth, and fifty-ninth of his fragments and eſſays in the fifth volume of his works. He treats that learned divine, as if he maintained, that theſe reaſons and fitneſſes of things, were real natures, exiſting independently of God, and co-eternal with him. And yet he himſelf, ſpeaking of Dr. *Cudworth* and others,

* Vol. V. p. 344. † See idea of a patriot king in Vol. III. of his works, p. 53.

obſerveth

observeth that when they talk of eternal ideas and essences independent on the will of God, "they do not mean by these eternal independent natures, any natures at all, but such intelligible essences and *rationes* of things, as are objects of the mind *." And it is his own observation, that "God knew from all eternity every system that he created in time — the relations things should bear — and the proportions they should have †" — and that "to the divine omniscience the future is like the present;" and therefore he thinks it improper to talk of *prescience* in God. He represents it as "a great truth, that the whole series of things is at all times actually present to the divine mind: so that we may say properly, that God knows things, because they are actual to him ‡." According to his own representation therefore it may be justly said, that all the fitnesses and relations of things were from the beginning actually present to the divine mind. And he accordingly declares, that God was *determined* by his *infinite wisdom* to *proceed with his creatures* in *all the exertions of his power, according to the fitness of things* ||. Or in other words, as he elsewhere expresseth it, God does *not govern by mere arbitrary will*; but always *does that which is fittest to be done*; and which he from all eternity saw would be fittest to be done. And this seems to be all that

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* Vol. V. p. 15. † *Ib.* p. 7. ‡ *Ib.* p. 457, 458.
|| *Ib.* p. 435.

is

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is really intended by thoſe who ſpeak of the eternal reaſons and fitneſſes of things. Whether therefore the manner of expreſſion be ſtrictly proper or not, this writer had no right to paſs ſo ſevere a cenſure upon it as he has done, ſince it comes ſo near to his own.

But I believe you will think it is time to quit this ſubject; and paſs on to ſome other things in Lord *Bolingbroke*'s works, which relate to things of no ſmall importance, and which will deſerve a particula reconſideration.

I am Yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

The doctrine of divine providence nearly connected with that of the exiſtence of God. Lord Bolingbroke's *account of it conſidered. He acknowleges a general, but denies a particular providence, and aſſerts that providence relates only to collective bodies, but doth not extend to individuals. The true notion of providence ſtated. What we are to underſtand by a particular providence. The reaſonableneſs of believing it, and the great importance of it ſhewn. The contrary ſcheme is abſurd and inconſiſtent with itſelf, and of the worſt conſequence to mankind. The objections againſt a particular providence examined. Concerning occaſional interpoſitions. They are not properly miraculous, nor deviations from the general laws of providence, but applications of thoſe laws to particular caſes. To acknowlege ſuch interpoſitions is not to ſuppoſe the world governed by miracles, nor to introduce an univerſal Theocracy like the* Jewiſh. *Angels may be employed in particular caſes as miniſters of providence.*

SIR,

THE doctrine of divine providence hath a very near connection with that of the exiſtence of the Deity, and is no leſs neceſſary

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to be believed. To acknowlege a God that brought all things into exiſtence, and yet to deny that he afterwards taketh care of the creatures he hath made, or that he exerciſeth any inſpection over them, as a moral governor, or concerneth himſelf about their actions, and the events relating to them, is, with regard to all the purpoſes of religion, the ſame thing as not to acknowlege a God at all. It is one great excellency of the holy Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament, that they every-where teach us to have a conſtant regard to the divine providence, as preſiding over the univerſal ſyſtem, and all the orders of beings in it, and as in a particular manner exerciſing a continual care and inſpection towards mankind, obſerving all their actions, and ordering and diſpoſing the events relating to them with infinite wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and goodneſs. But this doctrine of providence, which, one ſhould think, ought mightily to recommend the Scriptures to every good mind, ſeems to have been one principal ground of the prejudices which Lord *Bolingbroke* hath conceived againſt thoſe ſacred writings. It is true, that he frequently affecteth to ſhew a zeal for divine providence: He ſets up as an advocate for its proceedings againſt the divines, who, he pretends, join with the Atheiſts in miſrepreſenting and oppoſing it. But if his ſcheme be narrowly examined, it will appear that notwithſtanding his fair pretences, he doth not acknowlege a providence in that ſenſe in which

which it is moſt uſeful and neceſſary to believe it. LETTER VII.

He declares, that "in aſſerting the juſtice of "providence, he has choſen rather to inſiſt on "the moſt viſible and undeniable courſe of a "general providence, than to aſſume a diſpen-"ſation of particular providences*." He obſerves, that "the world is governed by laws, "which the Creator impoſed on the phyſical "and moral ſyſtems, when he willed them into "exiſtence, and which muſt be in force as long "as they laſt; and any change in which would "be a change in the ſyſtems themſelves. Theſe "laws are invariable, but they are general, and "from this generality what we call contingen-"cies ariſe†." "The courſe of things rolls on "through a vaſt variety of contingent events; "for ſuch they are to our apprehenſion; ac-"cording to the firſt impreſſions of motion that "were given it by the firſt Mover, and under "the direction of an univerſal providence ‡." "As to the brute animals, they are left under "the direction of inſtinct: And as to men, God "has given his human creatures the materials "of phyſical and moral happineſs in the phy-"ſical and moral conſtitution of things. He "has given them faculties and powers, neceſ-"ſary to collect and apply theſe materials, and "to carry on the work——This the Creator has "done for us. What we ſhall do for ourſelves, "he has left to the freedom of our elections.

* Vol. V. p. 414. † *Ib.* p. 416. ‡ *Ib.* p. 379.

"This

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"This is the plan of divine wiſdom: And we "know nothing more particular, and indeed "nothing more at all, of the diſpenſations of "providence than this *." This then is all the part he allows to providence in the moral world, that God has given man reaſon, and, as he elſewhere obſerves, paſſion §, and has left him to the freedom of his own will, without ever concerning himſelf farther about the individuals of the human race, or exerciſing any inſpection over men's moral conduct, in order to the rewarding the good, or puniſhing the bad. That this is his intention is manifeſt by comparing this with other paſſages. He expreſly declares, that "it is plain from the whole courſe of God's "providence, that he regards his human crea"tures collectively, not individually, how wor"thy ſoever every one of them deems himſelf "to be a particular object of the divine care †." This of God's regarding men collectively, not individually, is what he frequently repeats; and it appears to be a principal point in his ſcheme. With the ſame view he declares, that the ſanctions of the law of nature relate not to individuals, but to collective bodies ‡. He finds fault with the notion, which, he ſays, obtained among the heathens, "that God was conſtantly atten"tive to the affairs of men §§. And aſſerts, that "God may foreſee, or rather ſee, all the "moſt contingent events that happen in the

* Vol. V. p. 473, 474. § *Ib.* p. 417. † *Ib.* p. 431.
‡ *Ib.* p. 90. §§ *Ib.* p. 211.

"course of his general providence; but not provide for particular cases, nor determine the existence of particular men *." He observes, that "the divine providence has provided means to punish individuals, by directing men to form societies, and to establish laws, in the execution of which civil magistrates are the vicegerents of providence. And when the immorality of individuals becomes that of a whole society, then the judgments of God follow, and men are punished collectively in the course of a general providence *." So that he allows no punishments by providence for individuals, but those which are executed by the civil magistrates. And if a man can escape punishment from them, he has nothing to fear from God, except the whole community be as bad as himself. And even then the punishment may not happen in that or the next age, till he shall be no more. LETTER VII.

Our author indeed sometimes declares, that "he neither affirms nor denies particular providences ‡." And after having observed, that there is little credit to be given to the reports concerning particular acts of providence, wrought on particular occasions, he adds, that "yet he "will not presume to deny, that there have "been any such §." He makes the same declaration afterwards towards the end of his book ‖. But notwithstanding these professions,

* Vol. V. p. 462. ‡ *Ib.* p. 413, 414. § *Ib.* 429.
‖ *Ib.* p. 546.

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it is a point that he hath very much laboured to deſtroy the belief of a particular providence. This is the expreſs deſign of ſeveral of his fragments and eſſays in the fifth volume of his works; eſpecially of the fifty-fifth, fifty-ſixth, fifty-ſeventh, ſixty-ſecond, and ſixty-fourth, of thoſe Eſſays; in all which he argues directly, and in ſome of them largely, againſt that doctrine. And after having obſerved, that *what we find in the book of nature is undoubtedly the word of God*, he aſſerts, that "there we ſhall find no foun-"dation for the ſcheme of a particular provi-"dence*." He declares indeed, "that he will "not be ſo uncharitable as to ſay, that divines "mean to blaſpheme [in their doctrine of a par-"ticular providence]," yet that this he will take upon him to ſay, that "he who follows them "cannot avoid preſumption and profaneneſs, "and muſt be much on his guard againſt blaſ-"phemy ‖."

That I may obſerve ſome order in my reflections upon this ſubject, I ſhall firſt offer ſome obſervations for ſtating the right notion of divine providence, and what we are to underſtand by a particular providence. And then ſhall proceed to ſhew the abſurdity and ill conſequences of the author's ſcheme. And laſtly conſider the arguments he hath urged in ſupport of it, and the objections he hath made againſt the doctrine of a particular providence.

* Vol. V. p. 471. ‖ *Ib.* p. 464.

By the doctrine of providence I underſtand the doctrine of an all-perfect mind, preſerving and governing the vaſt univerſe in all its parts, preſiding over all the creatures, eſpecially rational moral agents, inſpecting their conduct, and ſuperintending and ordering the events relating to them, in the beſt and fitteſt manner, with infinite wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and equity. And ſuch a providence cannot reaſonably be denied by thoſe, who believe, that the world was originally formed by a moſt wiſe and powerful and infinitely perfect cauſe and author. For whatever reaſons induced him to create the world, which may be juſtly ſuppoſed to have been for the communications of his goodneſs, and for the joint exerciſe and diſplay of his glorious attributes and perfections, muſt equally diſpoſe him to take care of it, and govern it when made. Accordingly the Epicureans and others who denied a providence, did alſo deny that the world was made by God, and attributed the formation of it, not to the wiſdom, the power, and will of an intelligent cauſe, but to a wild chance, or fortuitous concourſe of atoms, or to an equally blind fatal neceſſity. And ſo far their ſcheme, however falſe and abſurd, was conſiſtent with itſelf. For they could find no effectual way to exclude God from the government of the world, which was what they wanted to get rid of, but by excluding him from the making of it too. Suppoſing one ſupreme abſolutely perfect Cauſe and Author of all things, who made this vaſt uni- LETTER VII.

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verſe, and all the orders of beings in it, which is what Lord *Bolingbroke* not only allows, but expreſly aſſerts, it follows by the moſt evident conſequence, that the ſame infinite power, wiſdom, and goodneſs, which gave exiſtence to the world and all things in it, ſtill preſideth over the univerſal frame in all its parts. The beautiful and conſtant order, which is ſtill maintained in the inanimate material ſyſtem, plainly ſheweth that this ſtupendous frame of nature, conſiſting of ſuch an unconceivable variety of parts, is under the conſtant ſuperintendency of a moſt wiſe and powerful preſiding Mind, ever preſent to his own work. But the providence of God is eſpecially to be conſidered as exerciſed towards reaſonable creatures, moral agents, which are undoubtedly the nobleſt and moſt excellent of his creatures. The material ſyſtem, whatever order or beauty appeareth in it, is not itſelf conſcious of that beauty and order. Nor are mere ſenſitive beings capable of making proper reflections upon it, or of admiring, adoring, obeying the great Parent of the univerſe. This is the ſole privilege of rational intelligent beings. If therefore the providence of God extended to any of his creatures at all, we may be ſure that he exerciſeth a ſpecial care over his reaſonable creatures. And ſince he hath given them ſuch noble faculties and moral powers, will govern them in a way ſuitable to thoſe faculties and powers. And this certainly is the moſt admirable part of the divine adminiſtrations in the government

of

of the univerſe. For to govern numberleſs myriads of active intelligent beings, in their ſeveral orders and degrees, each of whom have a will and choice of their own, and a power of determining their own actions, to exerciſe a conſtant ſuperintendency over them, and to order the events relating to them, and to diſpenſe to them proper retributions, not only according to their outward actions, but the inward diſpoſitions and principles from which thoſe actions flow: I ſay, thus to govern them without infringing the liberty which belongeth to them, as moral agents, muſt needs argue a wiſdom as well as power that exceedeth our comprehenſion. Yet who will undertake to prove that this is impoſſible, or even difficult, to an infinite, all-comprehending mind? We may reaſonably conceive, that that immenſe Being, whoſe eſſence poſſeſſeth every part of this vaſt univerſe, is preſent to every individual of the human race. And if that moſt wiſe, holy, and abſolutely perfect Being, the Great Governor of the world, be always preſent to every individual of the human race, then every individual, and all their particular actions, caſes, and circumſtances, muſt be under his providential inſpection and ſuperintendency. And as he knoweth all theſe things when they actually happen, ſo he, to whom, by our author's own acknowlegement, future things are as if they were preſent, ſaw them before they came to paſs. And therefore it was not difficult for him

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to form ſuch a comprehenſive ſcheme of things in his infinite mind, as ſhould extend to all their particular caſes, and the events relating to them, in a manner perfectly conſiſtent with the exerciſe of their reaſonable moral powers, and the uſe of their own endeavours.

And now it appears what is to be underſtood by the doctrine of a particular providence. It ſignifies, That providence extends its care to the particulars or individuals of the human race, which is what this writer denies: that God exerciſeth a continual inſpection over them, and knoweth and obſerveth both the good and evil actions they perform, and even the moſt ſecret affections and diſpoſitions of their hearts: that he obſerveth them not merely as an unconcerned ſpectator, who is perfectly indifferent about them, but as the ſupreme ruler and judge, ſo as to govern them with infinite wiſdom in a way conſiſtent with their moral agency, and to reward or puniſh them in the propereſt manner, and in the fitteſt ſeaſon. And as all their actions, ſo the events which befal them, are under his ſupreme direction and ſuperintendency. Particular events are, in the ordinary courſe of things, ordered in ſuch a manner as is ſubordinate to the general laws of providence, relating to the phyſical and moral world. And what are uſually called occaſional interpoſitions, are properly to be conſidered as applications of general laws to particular caſes and occaſions. They make a part of the univerſal plan of providence, and are

are appointed and provided for in it, as having been perfectly foreſeen from the beginning, and originally intended in the government of reaſonable beings. LETTER VII.

The doctrine of a particular providence taken in this view is of vaſt conſequence, and if duly conſidered and believed, could ſcarce fail to have a happy influence over our whole temper and deportment. How ſollicitous, how earneſtly deſirous ſhould this make us to approve ourſelves to our ſupreme governor and judge, and to walk always as in his ſight! What an animating conſideration is it, when we ſet about the performance of a good action, to be aſſured that God in his holy providence obſerveth the good deed in every circumſtance, and is ready to aſſiſt and ſupport us in it, and moſt certainly will not ſuffer it to paſs unrewarded! On the other hand, what an effectual reſtraint would it be to wicked actions, if we had this thought ſtrongly impreſſed upon our minds, that they are all perfectly known in every circumſtance to the moſt wiſe and righteous governor of the world; and that if he ſhould not at preſent follow them with immediate puniſhment, yet the time is coming, when he will call us to a ſtrict account for them! Finally, a firm belief of a particular providence, as moſt wiſely ordering and diſpoſing the events relating to particular perſons, is a ſource of ſatisfaction and comfort amidſt all the uncertainties and fluctuations of this preſent world. No conſideration is ſo well

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fitted to produce a chearful reſignation, and an inward ſolid peace and joy of heart as this, that all things, all particular caſes and circumſtances, are under the direction and government of the moſt perfect wiſdom, righteouſneſs and goodneſs; and that nothing can befal us without the direction or permiſſion of the ſupreme diſpoſer.

Nothing therefore could be worſe founded than the boaſts of the Epicureans, who expected to be applauded as friends and benefactors to mankind, on the account of their endeavours to deliver them from the apprehenſions of a providence. This might indeed be ſome relief to very bad men, and tend to make them eaſy in their ſins, but it was an attempt to rob good men of that which is the chief ſupport and comfort of their lives, and the moſt powerful encouragement to the ſteady uniform practice of piety and virtue. Lord *Bolingbroke* therefore was very ill employed, when he uſed his utmoſt efforts to deſtroy the doctrine of providence as extending its care and inſpection to individuals; ſince without this, the acknowlegment of what he calls a general providence would be of no great advantage, and would be, with regard to all the purpoſes of religion, little better than to deny that there is a providence at all.

This leads me to what I propoſed to ſhew in the next place, *viz.* the abſurdity, and the ill conſequences, of the ſcheme his Lordſhip hath advanced.

It

It is an abſurd and inconſiſtent ſcheme. He pretends to allow that God's providence extends to nations and large communities, that it regards men collectively, but not individually. But it is hard to conceive how a proper care could be taken of collective bodies, if the individuals of which they were compoſed were abſolutely neglected, and no regard had to them at all. A human government, that would have no regard to the caſes of particular perſons, to do them right or ſecure them from wrong, could ſcarce be accounted a government. Beſides, it may be asked, what his lordſhip means by collective bodies. There was a time when men had not yet formed themſelves into political ſocieties; muſt it be ſaid that they were then not the objects of providence at all? or, will it be allowed that providence extended its care to them, whilſt they were only in families? And how could families, either larger or ſmaller, be taken care of, if the individuals, of which families conſiſt, were neglected? And when ſeveral families united together, and formed larger communities, muſt it be ſaid, that providence quitted its care of the families to which it had extended before, and confined its inſpection to thoſe larger communities? And then it might be enquired, how large muſt a community be, in order to its being the proper object of divine providence? Does providence take notice of ſingle cities, or ſmaller republics, or only of thoſe communities which are become ſo numerous LETTER VII.

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rous as to be united into large nations or empires? It may be farther asked, In what ſenſe is it to be underſtood, that providence extends its care to collective bodies? All that he underſtands by it ſeems to be this: That "the courſe "of things has been always the ſame, that nati-"onal virtue and national vice have always pro-"duced national happineſs or miſery in a due "proportion, and are by conſequence the great "ſanctions of the law of nature *." The appointing this general conſtitution then ſeems to be all the concern that he allows to divine providence with regard to large communities or collective bodies: and the only ſanctions he allows of the law of nature (as I ſhall have occaſion more diſtinctly to ſhew, when I come to conſider the account he gives of that law) are the public happineſs or miſery of large ſocieties or nations; and theſe are often ſome ages in operating. It frequently happens that nations and large communities continue for a conſiderable time in great outward proſperity, when there is little national virtue remaining. And our author himſelf acknowleges, that the motives drawn from the effects of virtue and vice on collective bodies, are "ſuch as particular "perſons will be apt to think do not concern "them, becauſe they conſider themſelves as in-"dividuals, and catch at pleaſure rather than "happineſs †." And as nations are made up of families and ſmaller ſocieties, if theſe be not

* Vol. V. p. 472. † Vol. IV. p. 288.

well

well conſtituted, as they cannot be, where there is no ſenſe of religion, no fear of God, or regard to a providence as extending to individuals, there cannot be much national order or virtue. LETTER VII.

Lord *Bolingbroke* would, in my opinion, have been more conſiſtent with himſelf, if he had abſolutely denied, that providence hath any regard to mankind at all, than to pretend that it extends to collective bodies, but not to individuals. For the ſame arguments, which prove a providence as extending to mankind in general, do alſo, if rightly conſidered, prove that it is exerciſed towards particular perſons, and extendeth to particular caſes and circumſtances. This writer ſets himſelf, as hath been already obſerved, with great appearance of zeal, to vindicate the goodneſs and juſtice of divine providence in its diſpenſations towards mankind, in oppoſition both to Atheiſts and Divines. But how the juſtice and goodneſs of providence towards mankind can be vindicated, if no regard be had to individuals, is hard to ſee. He himſelf obſerves, that "juſtice requires, that puniſh-"ments ſhould be meaſured out in various de-"grees and meaſures according to the various "circumſtances of particular caſes, and in pro-"portion to them *." And again he repeats it, "that juſtice requires, that rewards and "puniſhments ſhould be meaſured out in every "particular caſe, in proportion to the merit

* Vol. V. p. 494.

"and

LETTER VII. " and demerit of each individual *." How then can he pretend to vindicate the juſtice of providence in this preſent ſtate, when he makes it eſſential to juſtice that regard ſhould be had to the caſe of individuals, and yet affirms, that providence doth not conſider men individually at all, but only collectively?

And as his ſcheme is abſurd, and inconſiſtent with itſelf, ſo it is attended with the moſt pernicious conſequences, which ought to create a horror of it in every well-diſpoſed mind. If providence hath no regard to individuals, there can be no ſenſe of the divine favour for good actions, no fear of the divine diſpleaſure for evil ones; and, as will appear to be his Lordſhip's ſentiment, no future account to be apprehended. Thus every man is left to do what is right in his own eyes without the dread of a ſupreme governor and judge. It is true, God hath eſtabliſhed general laws at the beginning, but he concerneth himſelf no farther. And our author will not allow that in theſe general laws, or the plan originally formed in the divine mind, God had any regard unto, or made any proviſion for, particular perſons, actions, or events. Good men therefore have no reſource in their calamities, no ground to apply to God for ſupport under them; no expectation of aſſiſtance from him, or from any other being, acting under his direction, as the miniſters and inſtruments of his providence. They are deprived of the comforts

* Vol. V. p. 495.

ariſing

arising from a consciousness of his special appro- LETTER
bation and complacency, and from the prospects VII.
of reward from him here or hereafter. Thus *hope* is excluded, which, as his Lordship observes, "above all things softens the evils of this life, "and is that cordial drop which sweetens every "bitter potion, even the last *." On the other hand, wicked men have nothing to fear from God for their evil actions. He says indeed, in a passage cited above, that "providence has pro- "vided means to punish individuals, by direct- "ing men to form societies, and to establish "laws, in the execution of which civil magi- "strates are the vicegerents of providence." But I do not see with what propriety upon his scheme civil magistrates can be said to be the vicegerents of providence. For if providence doth not consider men individually at all, how can magistrates, in punishing individuals, be regarded as the vicegerents of providence? Or if providence constituted them its vicegerents, and there were no sanctions at all proposed for particular persons but those of the civil laws, it would follow that men may be as wicked as they will, and give as great a loose as they please to their appetites and passions, provided they can manage so as to escape punishment from human judicatories, which a man may do, and yet be a very bad man. Human magistrates are often themselves corrupt. *Solomon's* observation is certainly just. *I have seen the place*

* Vol. V. p. 379.

of

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of judgment, that wickedneſs was there, and the place of righteouſneſs, that iniquity was there, Eccleſ. iii. 16. Very unjuſt things are often done under colour of forms of law. Or, ſuppoſe the laws good, and the magiſtrates juſt and upright, no human laws can reward or puniſh inward good or bad affections, intentions, and diſpoſitions of the heart. If therefore there were no regard to a ſupreme governor or judge, to the divine approbation or diſpleaſure, as extending to individuals, or to a future account, there is great reaſon to think that mankind in general would be far more wicked and diſſolute than they are. It is his Lordſhip's obſervation, that "amidſt the contingencies of "human affairs the odds will always be on the "ſide of appetite—Which reaſon cannot quite "ſubdue in the ſtrongeſt minds, and by which "ſhe is perpetually ſubdued in the weakeſt *." And accordingly the ableſt politicians have thought the aids of religion, which eſpecially includes a regard to providence as extending to individuals, abſolutely neceſſary for ſtrengthening the bands of civil government.

I ſhall now conſider the arguments Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered in ſupport of his ſcheme, and the objections he hath advanced againſt the doctrine of a particular providence.

He frequently intimates, that the doctrine of a particular providence is needleſs; "ſince the "ordinary courſe of things preſerved and con-

* Vol. V. p. 479.

"ducted

" ducted by a general providence is ſufficient to LETTER
" confirm what the law of nature and reaſon VII.
" teaches us *." But it appears from what hath been already obſerved, that the doctrine of a general providence, as he underſtands it, *i. e.* a providence that has no regard to individuals at all, to their actions, or to the events that befal them, is far from being ſufficient to the purpoſes of religion and virtue, or of human ſocieties: That it neither furniſheth proper comfort and ſupports for the encouragement of good men, nor is ſufficient to ſtrike terror into bad men, and to be a reſtraint to vice and wickedneſs. It hath alſo been ſhewn, that the notion of a general providence, as excluding all regard to individuals, and to their actions and concernments, cannot be ſupported, nor made to conſiſt with reaſon or with itſelf. And whereas it is repreſented as a degrading the divine Majeſty, to ſuppoſe him to concern himſelf about what relates to ſuch inconſiderable beings, as are the individuals of the human race; this objection, though varniſhed over with a pretence of conſulting God's honour, doth at the bottom argue mean and unworthy notions of him. It is in effect a judging of God by our own imperfections. Our views are narrow and limited, and cannot take in many things at once, nor attend to ſmaller matters without neglecting things of greater conſequence. But it is otherwiſe with a being of infinite perfection, who is intimately preſent to every part of this vaſt univerſe, and

* Vol. V. p. 404.

knoweth

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knoweth and taketh care of all things at once, with the ſame eaſe as if he had only one ſingle thing to attend to. He is capable of exerciſing a moſt wiſe providential care towards all his creatures in a way ſuited to their ſeveral natures, conditions, and circumſtances: nor can the multiplicity of things occaſion the leaſt confuſion or perplexity in his all-comprehending mind.

The arguments which he urgeth againſt a particular providence, in the LVIIth of his Fragments and Eſſays, for ſeveral pages together *, proceed upon a continued miſrepreſentation of the ſenſe of thoſe whom he has thought fit to oppoſe. He there chargeth the divines as maintaining, that God ought by particular providences to interpoſe in every ſingle inſtance, for giving an immediate reward to every good action, and for puniſhing every evil one, even in this preſent ſtate. He ſuppoſes them alſo to hold that ſome men are neceſſarily determined to good actions by divine influences communicated to them, and others for want of thoſe influences unavoidably determined to evil. And then he argues, that on ſuch a ſuppoſition there would be no room for free choice, nor conſequently for virtue or vice, merit or demerit, nor therefore for juſtice or injuſtice †. He urgeth further, that if good men were conſtantly and remarkably diſtinguiſhed by a particular providence, it would be apt to produce preſumption in them, to deſtroy or prevent their

* Vol. V. p. 424, *et ſeq.* † *Ib.* p. 425, 426.

benevolence, and consequently their goodness; and to harden the wicked *. And that even on that supposition, the providence of God could not be vindicated in the opinion of mankind, or of divines themselves, since still it would not be agreed who were good men. The *Mahometans*, Christians, and different sects of the latter, would insist upon it, that goodness includes a belief of their distinguishing tenets, and an attachment to their several systems of religion. "One would pass for a good man at "*Rome*, another at *Geneva*," &c. †. But he seems not to have considered, that upon the supposition he puts, there could be no place for this objection; since if every good man and good action was to be immediately and remarkably distinguished by a particular interposition of divine providence, and every bad man and evil action to be immediately punished, there would be no room left for men's passing different judgments concerning the goodness or badness of persons or actions; for on that supposition, there would be a visible determination of heaven in favour of every good man and good action; so that no man could doubt, upon seeing any person thus remarkably favoured and distinguished, that he was really good, whatever denomination he might pass under. But the truth is, no divine ever advanced such an hypothesis as he here argueth against. By the doctrine of a particular

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* Vol. V. p. 428, 429. † *Ib.* p. 431, 432.

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providence they do not mean a conſtant particular interpoſition of divine providence for rewarding every good man and virtuous action, and puniſhing every bad man and every wicked action, in an immediate and viſible manner here on earth. On the contrary, they univerſally maintain that this preſent ſtate is a ſtate of trial and diſcipline; and that it would be no way agreeable to the nature of ſuch a ſtate to have all good men and good actions immediately and remarkably rewarded, and all wicked men immediately puniſhed: That the temporary ſufferings of good men, and the proſperity of the wicked, are permitted for very wiſe ends, and may be reaſonably and conſiſtently accounted for, on the ſuppoſition that this preſent life is a ſtate of trial; though they could not well be accounted for, if this were deſigned to be a ſtate of final retributions, or to be the only ſtate of exiſtence allotted us.

The greateſt part of what he offers againſt a particular providence in the LXIId of his Fragments and Eſſays, relates to *occaſional* interpoſitions, which he pretends would be miracles if they were real. "Such, he ſays, they would be "ſtrictly, whether they were contrary to the "eſtabliſhed courſe of nature or not; for the mi-"racle conſiſts in the extraordinary interpoſition, "as much as in the nature of the thing brought "to paſs: That the miracle would be as real in "the one caſe as in the other; and the reality "might be made evident enough by the occa-

" ſions, by the circumſtances, by the repetition of it on ſimilar occaſions, and in ſimilar circumſtances; and above all, by this circumſtance, that the aſſumed particular providence was a direct anſwer to particular prayers, and acts of devotion offered up to procure it *." Here he takes upon him to give a new and arbitrary definition of a miracle. Though a thing hath nothing in it contrary to the eſtabliſhed courſe of nature, yet it is to be regarded as a miracle, if there be ſuppoſed to be any ſpecial agency of the divine providence in it, ſuited to particular occaſions and circumſtances; and above all, if it be ſuppoſed to come in anſwer to prayer. But if the occaſional interpoſitions he refers to be perfectly agreeable to the general laws of nature and of providence, and be only ſpecial applications of general laws to particular occaſions, I do not ſee how they can be properly ſaid to be miraculous at all; or how their being ſuppoſed to come in anſwer to prayer can make them ſo.

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But he urgeth farther, that " if providences " were directed according to the particular deſires, and even wants of perſons equally well " qualified and intitled to the divine favour, the " whole order of nature, phyſical and moral, " would be ſubverted, the affairs of mankind " would fall into the utmoſt confuſion—And " if this ſcheme were true, the world would be " governed by miracles, till miracles loſt their " name †."

* Vol. V. p. 458, 459. † *Ib.* p. 460.

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But all this proceeds upon a great miſtake of the point in queſtion. None of the divines that hold a particular providence, *i. e.* a providence which extendeth its care to particular perſons or individuals of the human race, maintain or ſuppoſe that God muſt interpoſe to ſatisfy all the different deſires and prayers of men, many of which, as he obſerves, are repugnant to one another. If the prayers be of the right kind, ſuch as reaſon and religion preſcribes, they muſt be always offered up with this condition or limitation, which the Scripture expreſly directs us to, *viz.* that we muſt deſire the things we pray for, ſo far and no farther than they are agreeable to the divine will, and to what it ſeemeth fit to God in his infinite wiſdom to appoint. Suppoſing therefore a good man doth not obtain the particular bleſſing he prays for, he may reſt ſatisfied in this, that it is what the divine wiſdom doth not ſee fit to grant; and he only deſired it under that condition. Or, if he receives that particular good thing he prayed for, and regards it as an anſwer to his prayer, ſtill there is nothing miraculous in the caſe. There is nothing done in contravention to the uſual courſe of things which the divine wiſdom hath eſtabliſhed. It may juſtly be ſuppoſed to be a law of the moral world, that it is proper for us, in teſtimony of our dependence upon God, and in acknowlegement of his providence, to apply to him by prayer for the bleſſings we ſtand in need of. And that prayer ſo qualified as God requireth, proceeding from

from an honeſt and upright heart, and from good affections and intentions, and accompanied with the uſe of proper endeavours on our parts, is among the means appointed by divine wiſdom for obtaining the moſt valuable benefits, eſpecially thoſe of a ſpiritual nature. And the bleſſings thus communicated may be juſtly ſaid to be communicated not in a miraculous way, but in a way that is perfectly agreeable to the general laws of providence, and the order which the divine wiſdom hath appointed. Any one that conſiders this will eaſily ſee how little what our author has here offered is to the purpoſe; and yet he goes on to declaim after his manner, that particular providence puts a force on the mechanical laws of nature, and on the freedom of the will in a multitude of inſtances; and that thoſe who maintain this doctrine ſuppoſe that the laws of gravitation muſt be ſometimes ſuſpended, ſometimes precipitated, in compliance with men's deſires, and the tottering edifice muſt be kept miraculouſly from falling*.

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Among the extraordinary interpoſitions of divine providence, he reckons "the metaphyſical or phyſical influence of ſpirits, ſuggeſtions, ſilent communications, injections of ideas. Theſe things, he declares, he cannot comprehend; and he compares them to the altering or ſuſpending the courſe of the ſun, or revolutions of the earth, in the phyſical ſyſtem. And that all ſuch interpoſitions in the

* Vol. V. p. 460.

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"intellectual ſyſtem, as ſhould give thoughts and "new diſpoſitions to the minds of men, cannot "be conceived without altering in every ſuch in- "ſtance the natural progreſſion of the human "underſtanding, and that freedom of the will "which every man is conſcious that he has*."

Our author has here let us know what he thinks of all revelations, inſpirations, or communications from God the Supreme Spirit, or from ſubordinate created ſpirits to the human mind; that he regards them as inconſiſtent with the *laws of intellectual ſyſtem*, and the *natural progreſſion of the human underſtanding*, or eſſential *freedom of the will*. But whence could he know enough of the laws of the intellectual ſyſtem, to be able to pronounce that this is inconſiſtent with thoſe laws? That one man may ſuggeſt or communicate thoughts and ideas to another by words and language, and that there is nothing in this contrary to the nature and order of the underſtanding, or freedom of the will, is univerſally acknowleged: And why then ſhould it be thought inconſiſtent with theſe for God himſelf, or ſpiritual Beings ſuperior to man, to communicate thoughts and ideas to the human mind? The moſt natural way of working upon men as reaſonable creatures, and of influencing their actions in a way agreeable to the juſt order of their faculties, is by ſuggeſting proper thoughts or ideas to their minds, and our not

* Vol. V. p 414, 415.

being

being able particularly to explain how this is done is as juſt objection againſt it. This writer himſelf elſewhere ſpeaking of *that extraordinary action of God upon the mind which the word Inſpiration is now uſed to denote*, expreſly acknowleges, that "it is no more incomprehenſible than the ordinary action of mind on body, or body on mind *." And indeed it cannot without the higheſt abſurdity be denied, that God can work upon the ſpirits of men by an immediate influence, and yet in ſuch a way, as is perfectly agreeable to their rational natures, and which may not put any conſtraint upon the freedom of their wills. And many caſes may be ſuppoſed, in which his doing ſo may anſwer valuable ends. It may alſo be eaſily conceived, that he can make impreſſions upon men's minds by various other means, which he may make uſe of in his wiſe and ſovereign providence to this purpoſe, without at all infringing the order of things in the natural or moral world. LETTER VII.

He farther argues, that to ſuppoſe a providence extending to individuals, and particular occaſional interpoſitions, "is to ſuppoſe that there are as many providences as there are men:" Or, as he elſewhere expreſſeth it, that "common providence would break into a multitude of particular providences for the ſupply of wants, and grant of petitions †." But there is no real foundation for this pretence. There is one univerſal providence, which may

* Vol. III. p. 468. † *Ib.* p. 420.

LETTER VII. be conſidered as extending to particular perſons and caſes, all of which are perfectly known to God, and (as was before hinted) occaſion no confuſion or diſtraction in his infinite mind. Our author indeed declares, that "they who "have attempted to ſhew that God may act by "particular and occaſional interpoſitions, con-"ſiſtently with the preſervation of the general "order, appear to him quite unintelligible *." If it were ſo, our not being able diſtinctly to ſhew, how particular occaſional interpoſitions may conſiſt with the doctrine of a general providence, would be no argument at all againſt it. Since, as he himſelf obſerves upon another occaſion, "It is impertinent to deny the exiſtence "of any phenomenon, merely becauſe we can-"not account for it ‡." And yet we may eaſily conceive in general, that they are perfectly reconcilable, ſince, as hath been already hinted, theſe occaſional interpoſitions are uſually no more than the applications of the general laws of providence to particular caſes and circumſtances. That there may be, or that there have been, ſuch interpoſitions, he does not pretend abſolutely to deny: But, he ſays, that "we have "no foundation for them in our own expe-"rience, or in any hiſtory except that of the "Bible †." And yet ſoon after obſerves, that "every religion boaſts of many inſtances, "wherein the divine providence has been thus

* Vol. III. p. 414. ‡ *Ib.* p. 468. † Vol. V. p. 414.

"exer-

"exerciſed ‖." And certain it is, that this hath been the general ſentiment of mankind. Beſides the ordinary courſe of things which is to be regarded as under the conſtant care and direction of a ſovereign providence, there have been events of a remarkable and uncommon nature, though not properly miraculous, of which there are accounts in the moſt authentic hiſtories, and in which men have been apt to acknowlege a ſpecial interpoſition of divine providence. The moſt important events have been brought about by the ſeemingly ſmalleſt and moſt unlikely means. Things have been often ſtrangely conducted through many intricate turns to produce events contrary to all human expectation. Actions have been over-ruled to effects and iſſues quite oppoſite to the intentions of the actors. The moſt artful ſchemes of human policy have been ſtrangely baffled and diſappointed. Surpriſing changes have been wrought upon the ſpirits of men, and reſtraints laid upon their paſſions in a manner that can ſcarce be accounted for, and upon which great events have depended. Such things have naturally led mankind to acknowlege a divine hand, and a providence over-ruling human affairs. I am ſenſible many of thoſe who honour themſelves with the title of Free-thinkers will be apt to aſcribe this to ſuperſtition or enthuſiaſm. But what right have they to pronounce againſt the general ſentiments of mankind, and which ſeem to have ariſen from LETTER VII.

‖ Vol. V. p. 413.

LETTER VII. the obſervation of events which argue the over-ruling interpoſition of a ſuperior inviſible agency.

He obſerves with a ſneer, that "there is many "an old woman who is ready to relate with "much ſpiritual pride, the particular provi-"dences that attended her and hers*." As to the charge of ſpiritual pride, it is no more than he hath advanced againſt all that believe a particular providence, intereſting itſelf in the affairs of men; the belief of which he imputeth to *high notions of human importance.* That he himſelf had high notions of his own ſagacity cannot be doubted: But the ſentiments he is pleaſed to aſcribe to the old woman, ſeem to me to be more reaſonable, and would, if generally entertained, have a much better influence on mankind, than his own. Is it not much better, and more agreeable to reaſon and nature, for dependent creatures to regard the benefits they receive, and the good events which befal them, as owing to the interpoſition of a moſt wiſe and benign providence, and to acknowlege with thankfulneſs the condeſcending care and goodneſs of God in ſuch inſtances; than to paſs them over with a regardleſs eye, from an apprehenſion that God doth not concern himſelf with the affairs of men; that he is utterly unmindful of individuals, and taketh no notice of their actions, or of the events that relate to them? And this is the goodly ſcheme

* Vol. V. p. 418.

which

which this author hath taken ſo much pains to eſtabliſh. LETTER VII.

But he urgeth, that it is of no uſe to acknowlege particular interpoſitions of divine providence, ſince they cannot be diſtinguiſhed from events that happen in the courſe of God's general providence. "The effects, ſaith he, that "are aſſumed of particular providences, are ei-"ther falſe, or undiſtinguiſhable from thoſe of "a general providence, and become particular "by nothing more than the application, which "vain ſuperſtition or pious fraud makes of "them*." And he obſerves, that this holds with reſpect to the caſe not only of particular perſons, but of collective bodies. "Their cir-"cumſtances are ſo nearly alike, and they re-"turn ſo often to be equally objects of theſe "ſuppoſed providences, that no man will dare "to determine, where theſe providences have "been, or ſhould have been employed, and "where not †." It appears then, that though he ſometimes ſeems to acknowlege the care of divine providence as extending to collective bodies, though not to individuals, yet in reality he does not admit that providence interpoſes with regard to the one more than the other; or that in either caſe we can juſtly aſcribe any of the events that befal men, whether individually or collectively conſidered, to divine providence; ſince we cannot diſcern or diſtinguiſh in what events providence has been employed,

* Vol. V. p. 420. See alſo p. 450. † *Ib.* p. 460.

and

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and in what not. But the truth is, we need not be put to the difficulty of thus diſtinguiſhing, if we believe that providence is really concerned in them all. It over-ruleth both the affairs and events relating to nations and to particular perſons, diſpoſing and governing them in the fitteſt manner, according to what ſeemeth moſt fit to his infinite wiſdom, to which all circumſtances are perfectly known. And even where the events ſeem contrary, proſperous to one nation or particular perſon, adverſe to another, providence is to be regarded in both. For we can never err in judging that all events whatſoever are under the wiſe direction and ſuperintendency of a ſovereign providence, tho' when we undertake to aſſign the particular reaſons of God's providential diſpenſations, we may eaſily be miſtaken.

Our author farther objecteth againſt the doctrine of a particular providence, that it ſuppoſes all mankind to be under an univerſal theocracy like the *Jewiſh*; and he obſerves, that even in that caſe it would not have the effect to engage men to virtue, or deter them from vice and wickedneſs, any more than it did the *Jews* *. But he here confoundeth things that are of diſtinct conſideration. The heathens, and all mankind in all ages, have been under the care and ſuperintendency of divine providence, and even of a particular providence in the ſenſe in which we are now conſidering it; *i. e.* a providence

* Vol. V. p. 430.

which

which extendeth to the individuals of the human race, inspecting their actions, and disposing and governing the events relating to them. But they were not under the *Jewish* theocracy, which was a peculiar constitution, established for very wise purposes, the reasons and ends of which I shall afterwards have occasion more particularly to consider. At present I shall only observe, that though under that constitution we may justly suppose there were extraordinary interpositions in a way of mercy and judgment, both national, and relating to particular persons, more frequently than there would have been under another constitution; yet the design of it was not, as our author supposes, that providence should interpose for giving a present immediate reward to every good man, and every good action, and for immediately punishing every bad one. We find frequent pathetical complaints even under that dispensation, of the calamities and sufferings of good men, and the prosperity of the wicked. This gave occasion to the 37th and 73d Psalms. See also Psalm xvii. 14. *Jer.* xii. 1, 2. The proper ultimate reward of good men, and punishment of the wicked, was still reserved for a future state of retributions, which though not expressly mentioned in their law, was believed and expected; as appeareth from what *Solomon* hath said concerning it, *Eccles.* iii. 16, 17. xii. 14. LETTER VII.

I shall conclude this letter with taking notice of an observation of our author, which is designed

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ſigned to take off the force of an argument that Mr. *Wollaſton* had offered. "It will be of little "ſervice, ſaith he, to the ſcheme of particular "providences, to ſay, like *Wollaſton*, that there "may be incorporeal, or at leaſt inviſible be-"ings, of intellect and powers ſuperior to man, "and capable of mighty things: And that theſe "beings may be the miniſters of God, and the "authors of thoſe providences." He pretends, that there is no proof that there are ſuch beings, and ridicules the doctrine of *Genii* or *Dæmons*, as having been "owing to antient aſtrologers, "and the knaves or madmen that profeſſed the-"urgic magic." And he argues, that "if theſe "angels act by the immediate command of God, "it is in oppoſition to his general providence, "and to ſupply the defects of it; and that it is "to give up the government over mankind to "thoſe beings*." But it is with an ill grace that this writer ſeems here to queſtion the exiſtence of angels, when yet he frequently intimates, that there are many orders of beings much ſuperior to man, and that man is of the loweſt order of intellectual beings. He repreſents it as a thing highly probable, that "there "is a gradation from man through various forms "of ſenſe, intelligence, and reaſon, up to beings "unknown to us, whoſe rank in the intel-"lectual world is even above our conception†." And that "there may be as much difference "between ſome other creatures of God and man,

* Vol. V. p. 463, 464. † *Ib.* p. 329, 330.

"as there is between man and an oyſter *. And if it be allowed, that there are created intelligences much ſuperior to man, where is the abſurdity of ſuppoſing that they are employed by divine wiſdom as the inſtruments and agents of providence in its adminiſtrations towards the human race? Higher orders of creatures may in the original plan of providence be deſigned to aſſiſt, and exerciſe ſome ſuperintendency over the lower. It may reaſonably be conceived, that this may contribute to promote the beauty and order of the univerſe, and to connect the different orders of beings, and carry on a proper intercourſe between them. It is certain, that the exiſtence, and the interpoſition of ſuch beings on ſpecial occaſions, has been generally believed by mankind in all ages. And it is clearly determined in the revelation contained in the holy Scripture: So that it may be now aſſumed, not merely as a reaſonable hypotheſis, but as a truth that can be depended upon. Nor does the making uſe of angels as agents or inſtruments in the adminiſtrations of providence argue any *defect* of providence, as he is pleaſed to inſinuate, which ſtill overſees and directs the whole. For when God makes uſe of inſtruments in the courſe of his providence, it is not becauſe, like human governors, he is unable to do it immediately by himſelf, and cannot be perſonally preſent: For he is ſtill preſent to every part of the creation; and all things are under his direction and ſuper-

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* Vol. IV. p. 177.

intendency.

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intendency. But he is pleaſed to make uſe of ſome of his creatures as inſtruments in conferring benefits, or inflicting chaſtiſements upon others, for the better carrying on the order and œconomy of his kingdom, and for many wiſe ends which we cannot pretend at preſent diſtinctly to aſſign.

In my next I ſhall conſider what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered concerning the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate of retributions, which will let us farther into the true intention of his ſcheme.

I am, &c.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

Favourable declarations of Lord Bolingbroke *concerning the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate. He repreſents it as having been believed from the earlieſt antiquity, and acknowleges the great uſefulneſs of that doctrine. Yet it appears from many paſſages in his works, that he himſelf was not for admitting it. He treats it as an* Egyptian *invention, taken up without reaſon, a vulgar error, which was rejected when men began to examine. He will not allow that the ſoul is a ſpiritual ſubſtance diſtinct from the body, and pretends that all the phenomena lead us to think that the ſoul dies with the body. Reflections upon this. The immateriality of the ſoul argued from its eſſential properties, which are intirely different from the properties of matter, and incompatible with them. The author's objections anſwered. Concerning the moral argument for a future ſtate drawn from the unequal diſtributions of this preſent ſtate.* Lord Bolingbroke's *charge againſt this way of arguing as blaſphemous and injurious to divine providence conſidered. His great inconſiſtency in ſetting up as an advocate for the goodneſs and juſtice of Providence. That maxim,* Whatever is is beſt, *examined. If rightly underſtood, it is not inconſiſtent with the belief of a future ſtate.*

SIR,

LETTER VIII.

SIR,

HAVING conſidered the attempt made by Lord *Bolingbroke* againſt God's moral attributes, and againſt the doctrine of providence as exerciſing a care and inſpection over the individuals of the human race, I now come to another part of his ſcheme, and which ſeems to be deſigned to ſet aſide the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate of retributions. I join theſe together, becauſe there is a cloſe connection between them, and his lordſhip frequently repreſents the one of theſe as the conſequence of the other.

That I may make a fair repreſentation of his ſentiments, I ſhall firſt produce thoſe paſſages in which he ſeems to expreſs himſelf very favourably with reſpect to the doctrine of a future ſtate, and then ſhall compare them with other paſſages which have a contrary aſpect, that we may be the better able to form a juſt notion of his real deſign.

He obſerves, that "the doctrine of the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, began to be taught long before we have any light into antiquity; and when we begin to have any, we find it eſtabliſhed *: That it was ſtrongly inculcated from time immemorial; and as early as the moſt antient and learned nations appear to us." And he expreſly acknowleges the uſe-

* Vol. V. p. 237.

fulneſs

fulneſs of that doctrine to mankind, as well as its great antiquity. He declares, that "the doctrine "of future rewards and puniſhments, which ſup- "poſes the immortality of the ſoul, is no doubt a "great reſtraint to men*." That "it was invented "by the antient theiſts, philoſophers, and legi- "ſlators, to give an additional ſtrength to the ſan- "ctions of the law of nature; and that this mo- "tive every man who believes it may and muſt "apply to himſelf, and hope the reward, and fear "the puniſhment, for his ſecret as well as public "actions, nay, for his thoughts as well as his "actions†:" That "the greater part of the "heathen philoſophers did their utmoſt to en- "courage the belief of future rewards and pu- "niſhments, that they might allure men to "virtue, and deter them from vice the more ef- "fectually ‡." He obſerves, that "the hypo- "theſis of a life after this ſerved two purpoſes: "The one was, that it furniſhed an anſwer to "the objections of the atheiſts with reſpect to "the preſent unequal diſtributions of good and "evil." This ſeems unneceſſary to him, be- cauſe he looks upon the accuſation to be void of any foundation. But the other purpoſe, he ſays, "was no doubt very neceſſary, ſince the belief "of future rewards and puniſhments could not "fail to have ſome effect on the manners of "men, to encourage virtue, and to reſtrain "vice." Accordingly he calls it "a doctrine "uſeful to all religions, and incorporated into

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* Vol. III. p. 559. † Vol. V. p. 288. ‡ *Ib.* p. 220.

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"all the ſyſtems of Paganiſm *." And he ſays, "the heathen legiſlators might have reaſon to "add the terrors of another life to that of the "judgments of God, and the laws of men †."

And as he owns, that this doctrine is very uſeful to mankind, ſo he does not pretend poſitively to deny the truth of it. He introduces a plain man of common ſound ſenſe declaring his ſentiments upon this ſubject, and that though he could not affirm, he could not deny the immortality of the ſoul; and that there was nothing to tempt him to deny it; ſince whatever other worlds there may be, the ſame God ſtill governs; and that he has no more to fear from him in one world than in another: That like the auditor in *Tully*'s firſt *Tuſculan* diſputation, he is pleaſed with the proſpect of immortality ‡. Again, he obſerves, that "reaſon will neither "affirm nor deny that there is a future ſtate: "And that the doctrine of rewards and puniſh"ments in it has ſo great a tendency to inforce "the civil laws, and to reſtrain the vices of "men, that reaſon, which cannot decide for "it on principles of natural theology, will not "decide againſt it on principles of good policy. "Let this doctrine reſt on the authority of re"velation. A theiſt, who does not believe "the revelation, can have no averſion to the "doctrine ‖." After having mentioned the ſcheme of a future ſtate propoſed in the *analogy*

* Vol. V. p. 298. † *Ib.* p. 488. ‡ Vol. III. p. 558, 559. ‖ Vol. V. p. 322, 489.

of reason and revelation, p. 1. cap. 1. he says, LETTER VIII.
"This hypothesis may be received; and that it "does not so much as imply any thing repugnant to the perfections of the divine nature." He adds, "I receive with joy the expectations "it raises in my mind.——And the antient and "modern Epicureans provoke my indignation, "when they boast as a mighty acquisition their "pretended certainty that the body and the soul "die together. If they had this certainty, "could this discovery be so very comfortable? "——I should have no difficulty which to chuse, "if the option was proposed to me to exist "after death, or to die whole *."

If we were to judge of the author's real sentiments by such passages as these, we might be apt to think, that though he was not certain of the immortality of the soul, and a future state, yet he was much inclined to favour that doctrine as not only useful, but probable too. But there are other passages by which it appears, that notwithstanding these fair professions he did not really acknowlege or believe that doctrine himself, and as far as his reasoning or authority could go, has endeavoured to weaken, if not destroy, the belief of it in the minds of others too.

He represents this doctrine as at best no more than a useful invention. He expresly says, that "the antient theists, polytheists, philosophers, "and legislators, *invented* the doctrine of fu"ture rewards and punishments, to give an ad-

* Vol. V. p. 491, 492.—See also *ib.* p. 506, 507.

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"ditional ſtrength to the ſanctions of the law "of nature *." And particularly that the *invention* of it was owing to *Egypt, the mother of good policy as well as ſuperſtition* †. The general prevalency of this opinion he attributes to the *predominant pride of the human heart*; and that "every one was flattered by a ſyſtem "that raiſed him in imagination above corpo-"real nature, and made him hope to paſs an "immortality in the fellowſhip of the Gods ‡." And after having ſaid, that it cannot be demonſtrated by reaſon, he adds, that "it was originally an hypotheſis, and may therefore be a "vulgar error. It was taken upon truſt by the "people, till it came to be diſputed and cleared "by ſuch as did examine ‖." So that he ſuppoſes, that thoſe who believed it took it up upon truſt without reaſon or examination, and that they who examined rejected it. He pronounces, that the reaſonings employed by divines in proof of a future ſtate are "problematical and futile;" and that "the immortality of the ſoul reſts on "moral proofs, and thoſe proofs are precarious "to ſay no worſe of them §." After ſeeming to ſpeak very favourably in a paſſage cited above, of the hypotheſis of a future ſtate advanced in *Butler's Analogy*, he ſays, "It has no founda-"tion in reaſon, and is purely imaginary." He frequently ſuppoſes a connection between the immortality of the ſoul and a future ſtate; that

* Vol. V. p. 288. † *Ib.* p. 352, 489. ‡ *Ib.* p. 237.
‖ *Ib.* p. 352. § *Ib.* p. 323, 501.

the

the latter is in conſequence of the former; and he has endeavoured to ſubvert the foundation of that immortality by denying that the ſoul is a diſtinct ſubſtance from the body. This is what he hath ſet himſelf pretty largely to ſhew in ſeveral parts of his *Eſſay concerning the nature, extent, and reality of human knowlege*, which takes up near one half of the third volume of his works; eſpecially in the firſt, eighth, and ninth ſections of that eſſay. He expreſly aſſerts, that "there is not any thing, "philoſophically ſpeaking, which obliges us to "conclude, that we are compounded of mate-"rial and immaterial ſubſtance *:" That "im-"material ſpirits, conſidered as diſtinct ſub-"ſtances, are in truth the creatures of meta-"phyſics and theology †:" That human pride "was indulged by heathen philoſophers and "Platonic Chriſtians; and ſince they could "not make man participant of the divine nature "by his body, they thought fit to add a diſtinct "ſpiritual to his corporeal ſubſtance, and to "aſſume him to be a compound of both ‡:" And that "the notions that prevail about ſoul, "ſpiritual ſubſtance, and ſpiritual operations "and things, took their riſe in ſchools, where "ſuch doctrines were taught as men would be "ſent to *Bedlam* for teaching at this day ||." He has a long marginal note, Vol. III. p. 514, *et ſeq.* which is particularly deſigned to anſwer

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* Vol. III. p. 363, 364. † *Ib.* p. 427. ‡ *Ib.* p. 480.
|| Vol. III. p. 534, 535.

LETTER VII. Mr. *Wollaſton's* arguments for the immortality of the ſoul. He there affirms, that "it neither "has been nor can be proved, that the ſoul is a di- "ſtinct ſubſtance united to the body;" That to "ſuppoſe the ſoul may preſerve a faculty of "thinking when the body is deſtroyed, is aſ- "ſumed without any evidence from the phe- "nomena; nay, againſt a ſtrong preſumption "derived from them:" That "whilſt we are "alive, we preſerve the capacity, or rather fa- "culty, of thinking, as we do of moving, and "other faculties plainly corporeal. When we "are dead, all theſe faculties are dead with "us:"—And, as he thinks, "it might as rea- "ſonably be ſaid, we ſhall walk eternally, as "think eternally." He ſays, "the word ſoul, "in philoſophical conſideration, taken for a di- "ſtinct ſubſtance united to the body" may be pa- rallelled with "the *primum mobile*, and element "of fire, which were names invented to ſig- "nify things which have no exiſtence." And adds, that "this fragment of a ſoul, if it be a "fragment, received ſtrength from the ſuper- "ſtitious theology of the heathens *." He re- preſents the hypotheſis of two diſtinct ſubſtances in man as more "unconceivable and abſurd than "that of thoſe who ſay there is no ſuch thing "as material ſubſtance, or a material world †." And yet he ſays, "That there is material ſub- "ſtance no man can doubt—and that thoſe "who doubted it have either done it to exerciſe

* Vol. III. p. 516, 517, 518. † *Ib.* p. 522.

"their

" their wit, or have been tranſported by over- LETTER
" heated imaginations into a philoſophical deli- VIII.
" rium *." He pronounces, that for philoſophers to maintain that the ſoul is an immaterial being, is as if they ſhould agree " that twice " two makes five †." And though in a paſſage cited before, he introduces a plain man ſaying, that as he could not affirm, ſo he would not deny a future ſtate, yet he makes him declare, that " revelation apart, all the phenomena from " our birth to our death ſeem repugnant to the " immateriality and immortality of the ſoul; " ſo that he is forced to conclude with *Lu-* " *cretius*,

——— Quiqui pariter cum corpore, et una
Creſcere ſentimus, pariterque ſeneſcere mentem.

" That God had given him reaſon to diſtinguiſh " and judge, and external and internal ſenſe, " by which to perceive and reflect; but that " this very reaſon ſhewed him the abſurdity of " embracing an opinion concerning body and " mind, which neither of theſe ſenſes ſup- " ports ‡."

I believe you will be of opinion upon conſidering what has been now produced, that Lord *Bolingbroke* has left us little room to doubt of his real ſentiments in this matter, I ſhall now examine whether he has offered any thing that is really of force ſufficient to invalidate a doctrine,

* Vol. III. p. 379. † *Ib.* p. 536. ‡ *Ib.* p. 557.

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the belief of which he himſelf acknowleges to be of great uſe to mankind.

As to that which lies at the foundation of his ſcheme, *viz.* his denying that the ſoul is a ſpiritual or immaterial ſubſtance diſtinct from the body, I do not find that he has produced any thing which can be called a proof that ſuch a ſuppoſition is unreaſonable. He indeed inveighs againſt metaphyſicians and divines for talking about ſpiritual and immaterial eſſences and ſubſtances: He charges them with *fantaſtical ideas*, and a *pneumatical madneſs*. But ſuch invectives, which he repeats on all occaſions, will hardly paſs for arguments.

He doth not pretend to ſay, as ſome have done, that ſpiritual or immaterial ſubſtance implies a contradiction. He blames *Spinoſa* for maintaining that there is but one ſubſtance, that is matter; and aſſerts, that "though we do not "know the manner of God's being, yet we ac- "knowlege him to be immaterial, becauſe a "thouſand abſurdities, and ſuch as imply the "ſtrongeſt contradiction, reſult from the ſup- "poſition, that the Supreme Being is a ſyſtem "of matter *." He ſays indeed, that "of any "other ſpirit we neither have nor can have any "knowlege:" And that "all ſpirits are hypo- "thetical, but the Infinite Spirit, the Father of "Spirits †." But if there are other beings, whoſe eſſential properties are inconſiſtent with the known properties of matter, and particularly

* Vol. III. p. 321, 503. † *Ib.* p. 321, 427.

larly if our own ſouls are ſo, and if abſurd conſe- LETTER
quences would follow from the ſuppoſing them VIII.
to be material beings, may it not be reaſonably argued, that they are ſubſtances of a different kind from what we call matter or body? The only way we have, by his own acknowlegment, of knowing different ſubſtances is by their different qualities or properties. He obſerves, that "ſenſitive knowlege is not ſufficient to know "the inward conſtitution of ſubſtances, and "their real eſſence, but is ſufficient to prove "to us their exiſtence, and to diſtinguiſh them "by their effects *:" And that "the complex "idea we have of every ſubſtance is nothing "more than a combination of ſeveral ſenſible "ideas, which determine the apparent nature "of it to us." He declares, that "he cannot "conceive a ſubſtance otherwiſe than relatively "to its modes, as ſomething in which thoſe "modes ſubſiſt †." And blames the philoſophers for "talking of matter and ſpirit as if "they had a perfect idea of both, when in "truth they knew nothing of either but a few "phenomena inſufficient to frame any hypo-"theſis ‡." Yet he himſelf ſpeaks of material ſubſtance, as a thing "we perfectly know and "are aſſured of, whilſt we only aſſume or gueſs "at ſpiritual or immaterial ſubſtance ‖." But we have as much reaſon to be aſſured of the latter as of the former, ſince in either caſe the

* Vol. III. p. 371. † *Ib.* 524. ‡ *Ib.* 509, 510, 512.
‖ *Ib.* p. 509.

ſubſtance

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He finds great fault with Mr. *Locke* for endeavouring to ſhew that the notion of ſpirit involves no more difficulty or obſcurity in it than that of body, and that we know no more of ſolid than we do of the thinking ſubſtance, nor how we are extended than how we think. In oppoſition to this he aſſerts, that we have clear ideas of the primary properties belonging to body, which are ſolidity and extenſion; but that we have not a poſitive idea of any one primary property of ſpirit. And the only proof he brings for this is, that actual thought is not the eſſence of ſpirit; but if inſtead of actual thought being the eſſence of the ſoul, the faculty of thinking be ſuppoſed to be one of its primary eſſential qualities or properties, this is what we have as clear an idea of as we have of ſolidity and extenſion †. He himſelf elſewhere obſerves, that "our ideas "of reflection are as clear and diſtinct as thoſe "of ſenſation, and convey knowlege that may "be ſaid to be more real ‡:" And that the ideas "we have of thought by reflection, and of

* Vol. III. p. 509. † *Ib.* p. 510, 511, 512. ‡ *Ib.* 365.

ſome

" ſome few modes of thinking, are as clear as LETTER
" thoſe we have of extenſion, and the modes of VII.
" extenſion by ſenſation *." Why then may we not from thoſe ideas infer a thinking, as well as from the other a ſolid extended ſubſtance? And that theſe ſubſtances are abſolutely diſtinct, and of different natures, ſince their properties manifeſtly are ſo? He hath himſelf acknowleged enough to ſhew the reaſonableneſs of this concluſion. " That we live, and move,
" and think, ſaith he, and that there muſt be
" ſomething in the conſtitution of our ſyſtem
" of being beyond the known properties of
" matter to produce ſuch phenomena as theſe,
" are undeniable truths." He adds indeed,
" What that ſomething is, we know not; and
" ſurely it is high time we ſhould be convinced,
" that we cannot know it †." But though we cannot deſcribe its intimate eſſence, we may know enough of it to be convinced, that it is not matter. It is to no purpoſe to pretend, that there may be unknown properties of matter, by which it may be rendered capable of thinking. For the properties of matter that we do know are inconſiſtent with the power of ſelf-motion and conſciouſneſs. It is true, that he cenſures thoſe as *proud dogmatiſts*, who beſtow the epithets of *inert*, *ſenſeleſs*, *ſtupid*, *paſſive*, upon matter ‡." But in his calmer mood, when he is not carried away by the ſpirit of oppoſition, and has not his hypotheſis in view, he

* Vol. III. p. 427. † *Ib.* p. 509. ‡ *Ib.* p. 25.

owns,

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owns, that "matter is purely paſſive, and can "act no otherwiſe than it is acted upon *." It is therefore inconſiſtent with its nature to aſcribe to it a principle of ſelf-motion.

He expreſly acknowleges, that "our idea of "thought is not included in the idea of mat-"ter †." And that intellect is certainly above "the power of motion and figure, according to "all the ideas we have of them; and there-"fore, ſaith he, I embrace very readily the opi-"nion of thoſe who aſſume, that God has been "pleaſed to ſuperadd to ſeveral ſyſtems of mat-"ter, in ſuch proportions as his infinite wiſdom "has thought fit, the power of thinking ‡." This is an hypotheſis he ſeems fond of; he frequently refers to it, and ſays it is little leſs than blaſphemy to deny it ‖. Mr. *Locke*, as he obſerves, ſuppoſed, that God might if he pleaſed, give to certain ſyſtems of created ſenſeleſs matter, put together as he thinks fit, ſome degree of ſenſe, perception, and thought. But what Mr. *Locke* had advanced as barely poſſible, for aught he knew, to almighty power, our author aſſumes as having been actually done, and as continually done in the ordinary courſe of things. But I think we may ſafely leave it to any unprejudiced judgment, whether it be not more reaſonable and more philoſophical, to aſſign different ſubſtances as the ſubjects of properties ſo intirely different, than to ſuppoſe properties merely ſuperadded by Omnipotency to

* Vol. V. p. 472. † Vol. III. p. 364. ‡ Vol. V. p. 35. ‖ Vol. V. p. 364.

ſubſtances

ſubſtances to which they do not naturally belong? Why ſhould Lord *Bolingbroke* have been ſo backward to acknowlege a diſtinct ſubſtance from matter as the ſubject of theſe properties, when he himſelf was obliged to acknowlege, that the *idea of thought is not included in the idea of matter*, and that *intellect is above the power of motion and figure according to all the ideas we have of them?* Is it agreeable to the divine wiſdom, or to the order of things, to ſuppoſe that God, in the general courſe of his providence, continually ſuperadds preternatural or ſupernatural properties and powers to things not naturally fitted to receive them, rather than that he hath produced ſpiritual ſubſtances, to which by the original conſtitution of their natures theſe properties and powers do belong? It hath been often ſhewn by thoſe that have treated this ſubject, that the eſſential properties of body and ſpirit are not only diſtinct, but incompatible, and that therefore they cannot belong to the ſame ſubſtance, but muſt be the properties of different ſubſtances. Matter being a ſolid, figurable, diviſible ſubſtance, conſiſting always of ſeparable, nay of actually ſeparate and diſtinct parts, it is evident from the very nature of it that it is not one indiviſible ſubſtance, but is compounded of innumerable little ſubſtances, which are really diſtinct, though contiguous; ſo that if the intelligent ſubſtance in us were corporeal, it would be a compound of many intelligences and conſciouſneſſes, which could not be one and the

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same individual intelligence and consciousness. Matter therefore is not a subject capable of an individual consciousness, which consequently must have some other subject to reside in. This argument is pursued with admirable clearness and force by the learned Dr. *Clarke* in his letter to Mr. *Dodwell*, and in his several defences of it against Mr. *Collins*, who pushed the argument for the materiality of the soul as far as it could bear. Nor do I find that Lord *Bolingbroke* hath advanced any thing that can be called new upon this subject. He supposes but does not prove all the species of intellectual beings to be material, and talks of an *intellectual spring* common to them all; which, he says, is the same spring in all, but differently tempered, so as to have different degrees of force and elasticity in some from what it has in others; and he resolves the surprizing variety of its effect into the apparent difference in the constitutions or organizations of animals *. But it is justly argued on the other hand, that it is absurd to suppose, that that which is unintelligent and insensible before organization, can become intelligent and self-conscious by organization, since organization does not alter the nature and essence of things.

These observations seem to me sufficient to take off the force of what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath advanced, to shew that the soul is not an immaterial substance distinct from the body.

* Vol. III. p. 526, 527.

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His view in it is plain; it is to deſtroy the proof of its immortality, and to bring in this concluſion, that ſince it is not a diſtinct ſubſtance from the body, it muſt die with it. He pretends indeed that the opinion of the ſoul's immateriality adds no ſtrength to that of its immortality; and blames the metaphyſical divines for *clogging the belief of the immortality* of the ſoul with that of its *immateriality*; and that by *reſting too much* on the latter they *weaken* the former *. But the true reaſon of his finding fault with it is, that the immateriality of the human ſoul furniſheth a ſtrong preſumption in favour of its immortality, or at leaſt that it may ſurvive when the body is diſſolved. That he himſelf is ſenſible of this, appears from what he acknowleges, that "on ſuppoſition of the ſoul's being a dif-"ferent ſubſtance from matter, philoſophers "argue admirably well *a priori*, and prove with "great plauſibility, that this mind, this ſoul, "this ſpirit, is not material, and is immortal." He urges indeed, that "this aſſumption cannot "ſtand an examination *a poſteriori* †;" that is, as he elſewhere obſerves, all the phenomena, from our birth to our death ſeem repugnant to the immateriality and immortality of the ſoul. But all that theſe phenomena prove, is not that body and ſoul are one and the ſame ſubſtance, but that there is a cloſe union between them, which there may be, and yet they may be ſubſtances of very different natures; and that they really are

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* Vol. III. p. 535, 539. † *Ib.* p. 509.

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ſo appears, as has been already ſhewn, from their different eſſential properties. The laws of this union were appointed by the author of the human frame; and by virtue of thoſe laws ſoul and body have a mutual influence upon one another whilſt that union ſubſiſts. But it by no means follows, that when this union is diſſolved, both theſe ſubſtances, ſo different from one another, do alike fall into the duſt. Nor can this be concluded from the phenomena.——We ſee indeed what becomes of the fleſhy corruptible body, but we cannot pretend to decide that therefore the thinking immaterial ſubſtance is diſſolved too; or to determine what becomes of it.

But he urgeth, that "though thinking and "unthinking ſubſtances ſhould be ſuppoſed ne-"ver ſo diſtinct from one another, yet as aſ-"ſumed ſouls were given to inform bodies, "both are neceſſary to complete the human "ſyſtem; and that neither of them could exiſt "or act in a ſtate of total ſeparation from the "other *." And he obſerves, that Mr. *Wollaſton* is ſo ſenſible of this, that he ſuppoſes that there is beſides the body which periſhes, ſome fine vehicle that dwells with it in the brain, and goes off with it at death. Our author has not offered any thing to ſhew the abſurdity of this ſuppoſition, except by calling ſuch a vehicle the *ſhirt of the ſoul*, and talking of the ſoul's *flying away in its ſhirt into the open fields of heaven:*

* Vol. III. p. 517.

heaven: Which may, for aught I know, paſs with ſome perſons for witty banter; but has no argument in it. Very able philoſophers, both antient and modern, have ſuppoſed, that all created ſpirits are attended with material vehicles. But whatever becomes of this ſuppoſition with regard to the human ſoul, I do not ſee how it follows that a ſubſtance which is eſſentially active, intellective, and volitive, ſhould loſe all intellect, action, and volition, merely on its being ſeparated from a material ſubſtance to which it was united, and which is naturally void of theſe qualities. However it might be bound by the laws of that union for a time, there is no reaſon to think it ſhould be ſtill ſubject to thoſe laws, and that it ſhould be unable to act or think at all, after this union is diſſolved. LETTER VIII.

The only thing farther which hath any appearance of argument is, that "if the philoſopher aſſerts, that whatever thinks is a ſimple "being, immaterial, indiſſoluble, and therefore "immortal.——We muſt be reduced, if we "receive this hypotheſis, to ſuppoſe that other "animals beſides, have immaterial or immortal ſouls *." And if it be allowed, that other animals have immaterial ſouls too, I do not ſee what abſurdity follows from it; or why it may not reaſonably be ſuppoſed, that there may be innumerable gradations of immaterial beings of very different capacities, and intended for different ends and uſes. But our author urges

* Vol. III. p. 528.

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* Vol. III. 531.

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ſand ways which the Lord of nature may have of diſpoſing of them, which we know nothing of. LETTER VIII.

It appears from what hath been offered, that there is a real foundation in reaſon for the doctrine of the ſoul's immortality, and that therefore there is no need to reſolve it, as this writer ſeems willing to do, into the pride of the human heart. It is his own obſervation, "That "men were conſcious ever ſince their race ex- "iſted, that there is an active thinking principle "in their compoſition —That there are corpo- "real natures, we have ſenſitive knowlege: "That there are ſpiritual natures diſtinct from "all theſe, we have no knowlege at all. We "only infer that there are ſuch, becauſe we "know that we think, and are not able to con- "ceive how material ſyſtems can think *." And this certainly is a very reaſonable inference, as reaſonable as it is to infer a material ſubſtance from the affections and properties of matter.

It is proper to obſerve here, that our author hath acknowleged ſeveral things which furniſh a very reaſonable preſumption in favour of the doctrine of the immortality of the ſoul. One is, the univerſal prevalence of that doctrine from the eldeſt antiquity. For this ſeems to ſhew, that it is agreeable to the natural ſentiments of the human mind; or at leaſt that it was derived from a primitive univerſal tradition

* Vol. III. p. 536.

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received from the firſt anceſtors of the human race, and which was originally owing to divine revelation. Both theſe may probably have contributed to the general ſpreading of this notion. This writer, according to his cuſtom, varies on this head. For after having expreſly aſſerted, that this doctrine was *inculcated from time immemorial*, and that it *began to be taught long before we have any light into antiquity* *; he pretends to aſſign the original of it, and aſcribes the invention of it to *Egypt*, and that it came from thence to the *Greeks*, to whom it was brought by *Orpheus*, and from the *Greeks* to the *Romans* †. But we find it was equally received among the moſt barbarous as among the moſt polite nations. The antient *Indians*, *Scythians*, *Gauls*, *Germans*, *Britons*, as well as *Greeks* and *Romans*, believed that ſouls are immortal, and that men ſhould live in another ſtate after death. There were ſcare any among the *Americans*, when the *Europeans* firſt arrived there, who doubted of it. It has been almoſt as generally believed as the exiſtence of God; ſo that it may well paſs for a common notion.

Another thing taken notice of by this writer, and to which he partly aſcribes the belief of the ſoul's immortality, is what he calls *the powerful deſire of continuing to exiſt*. He obſerves, that this deſire was ſo ſtrong, that "the multi-"tude in the Pagan world were ready to em-"brace the hope of immortality, though it

* Vol. V. p. 237. 308. † *Ib.* p. 352, 489.

" was accompanied with the fear of damna- LETTER
" tion *." This ſtrong deſire of future exiſtence, VIII.
appears by his own account to be natural to the human mind. And would the Author of our beings have ſo conſtituted us, if the object of this deſire was vain, and if there were no future exiſtence to expect? Is not this powerful deſire or expectation of immortality, which is implanted in the human heart, an argument that he that made us, formed and deſigned us not merely for this preſent ſtate and tranſitory life, but for a future ſtate of exiſtence?

Lord *Bolingbroke* further obſerves, that one great cauſe of the ſpreading of this doctrine was its being encouraged by the politicians and legiſlators, as well as philoſophers, on the account of its great uſefulneſs to mankind, and becauſe they looked upon it to be neceſſary to inforce the ſanctions of the law of nature †. Now this great uſefulneſs and neceſſity of this doctrine is no ſmall argument of its truth. For if men are ſo framed, that they cannot be properly governed without the hopes or fears of a future ſtate; if theſe are neceſſary to preſerve order and good government in the world, to allure and engage men to virtue, and deter them from vice and wickedneſs; this ſhews that the Author of their beings deſigned them for immortality, and a future ſtate, and that conſequently ſuch a ſtate there really is; except it be ſaid, that he formed our natures ſo as to make it neceſſary to

* Vol. V. p. 237. † *Ib.* p. 281, 351.

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It ſufficiently appears from what hath been already obſerved, that our author by denying that the ſoul is an immaterial ſubſtance diſtinct from the body, hath done what he could to take away the force of the natural argument for a future ſtate of exiſtence and retributions after this life is at an end: It remains that we take notice of what he hath offered to deſtroy the moral arguments uſually brought for it from the ſuppoſed unequal diſtributions of this preſent ſtate. He ſets himſelf at great length to prove that the ſuppoſition is abſolutely falſe and groundleſs; that it is highly injurous to God; and tendeth to caſt the moſt blaſphemous reflections upon his providence. In the management of this argument he hath broke out into the moſt opprobrious invectives againſt the Chriſtian divines and philoſophers, whom he abuſes and traduces without the leaſt regard to decency. He frequently charges them as in a confederacy with the Atheiſts; and repreſents them as "complaining of the uniform conduct of that "providence of God which is over all his "works, and cenſuring their Creator in the "government of the world, which he has "made and preſerves.——That they have done "nothing more than repeat what all the "Atheiſts from *Democritus* and *Epicurus* have "ſaid: That they have puſhed their arguments "on this ſubject ſo far, that the whole tribe of

"theſe

" theſe writers, like *Wollaſton* and *Clarke*, do in LETTER
" effect renounce God, as much as the rankeſt of VIII.
" the Atheiſtical tribe: And he undertakes to
" prove this, to their ſhame, to be true *." That
" the heathen Theiſts defended the divine pro-
" vidence againſt the Atheiſts who attacked it,
" and recommended a chearful reſignation to
" all the diſpenſations of it; whereas Chriſtian
" divines have made a common cauſe with the
" Atheiſts to attack providence, and to mur-
" mur againſt the neceſſary ſubmiſſion that
" they pay †."——That " the Chriſtian philoſo-
" phers far from defending the providence of
" God, have joined in the clamour againſt it."
—— That " they have brought the ſelf-exiſtent
" Being to the bar of humanity,——and he has
" been tried, convicted, and condemned, like
" the governor of a province, or any other in-
" ferior magiſtrate ‡."

Accordingly he ſets up as a zealous advocate for the goodneſs and righteouſneſs of divine providence in the preſent conſtitution of things, and with great ſolemnity undertakes to *plead the cauſe of God* againſt Atheiſts and Divines. He affirms, that " notwithſtanding the human
" race is expoſed to various evils, there is no
" ground for complaint, but abundant cauſe
" for thankfulneſs ||." That " if we are ſub-
" ject to many evils, phyſical and moral, we
" can ſhew much more good of both kinds,

* Vol. V. p. 484, 485. † *Ib.* p. 486. ‡ *Ib.* p. 488.
|| *Ib.* p. 333, 334.

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" which God hath beſtowed upon us, or put it " into our power to procure to ourſelves."—— That the means to ſoften or prevent evils, the chief of which he reckons to be hope, are " ſo " many inſtances of the poſitive goodneſs of " God *:" That " neither the goodneſs nor " juſtice of God require that we ſhould be bet- " ter, nor happier than we are †:" That man " enjoys numberleſs benefits by the fitneſs of his " nature to the conſtitution of the world, un- " asked, unmerited, freely beſtowed ‡." He aſſerts, in oppoſition to Atheiſts and Divines, that " the general ſtate of mankind in the pre- " ſent ſcheme of providence is not only tole- " rable, but happy:——And that there is in " this world ſo much more good than evil, and " the general ſtate of mankind is ſo happy in it, " that there is no room for the exaggerated de- " ſcriptions that have been made of human mi- " ſery ‖:" That " God has made us happy, and " has put it into our power to make ourſelves " happier by a due uſe of our reaſon, which " leads us to the practice of moral virtue, and " to all the duties of ſociety ⸸:" That " good " men are often unhappy, and bad men happy, " has, he ſays, been a ſubject of invective ra- " ther than argument, to *Epicurus*, *Cotta*, and " others among the antients, and to eminent " divines among the moderns §." And he par- ticularly examines the inſtances produced by

* Vol. V. p. 336. † *Ib.* p. 512. ‡ *Ib.* p. 339.
‖ *Ib.* p. 392. ⸸ *Ib.* p. 384. § *Ib.* p. 394.

Cotta

Cotta in *Cicero* againſt the providence of God, and ſhews what *Balbus* might have anſwered *. He finds great fault with Dr. *Clarke* for ſaying, that "it is certain from the moral attributes of "God, that there muſt be ſuch a future ſtate of "exiſtence, as that by an exact diſtribution of "rewards and puniſhments, all the preſent diſ-"orders and inequalities may be ſet right, and "that the whole ſcheme of providence may ap-"pear at its conſummation to be a deſign worthy "of infinite wiſdom, juſtice, and goodneſs." See *Clarke*'s Evidences of natural and revealed Religion, Prop. IV. For this he calls him *audacious and vain ſophiſt*: And that, "accord-"ing to theſe men, it appears actually un-"worthy of them at preſent †." And in oppoſition, as he pretends, to divines, he ſhews the general tendency of virtue to promote happineſs, and of vice to produce miſery ‡.

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Theſe things he enlarges upon in ſeveral of his Fragments and Eſſays in the fifth volume of his works. See particularly the forty-third, forty-fourth, forty-eighth, forty-ninth, fiftieth, fifty-firſt, fifty-ſecond, fifty-third, and fifty-fourth of thoſe Fragments.

It will be neceſſary here to make ſome obſervations; and a few will be ſufficient.

And 1. My firſt reflection is this, That Lord *Bolingbroke* had no juſt pretenſions to value himſelf upon being an advocate for the good-

* Vol. V. p. 404, *et ſeq.* † *Ib.* p. 395. ‡ *Ib.* p. 399, *et ſeq.*

neſs

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neſs and righteouſneſs of divine providence; nor could properly attempt to vindicate it in a conſiſtency with his ſcheme. He had taken pains to ſhew, that moral attributes are not to be aſcribed to God as diſtinguiſhed from his phyſical attributes: That there is no ſuch thing as juſtice and goodneſs in God according to our ideas of them, nor can we form any judgment concerning them; and that there are many phenomena in the preſent courſe of things which are abſolutely repugnant to theſe moral attributes. But in that part of his book where he undertakes to juſtify the providence of God in this preſent ſtate, he not only ſuppoſes juſtice and goodneſs in God, but that they are conſpicuous in the whole courſe of his diſpenſations, and that the preſent ſtate of things is agreeable to our ideas of thoſe attributes. Another conſideration which ſhews his great inconſiſtency is, that at the ſame time that he ſets up as an advocate for the goodneſs and juſtice of providence in this preſent ſtate, he yet will not allow that providence conſiders men individually at all, though he himſelf owns that juſtice has neceſſarily a reſpect to individuals. I had occaſion to obſerve in my laſt letter, that he aſſerts, that "juſtice requires moſt certainly that rewards "and puniſhments ſhould be meaſured out in "every particular caſe in proportion to the me-"rit and demerit of each individual *." With what conſiſtency then can he undertake to de-

* Vol. V. p. 405.

monſtrate

monſtrate the juſtice of providence in this preſent ſtate, when he makes it eſſential to juſtice, that regard ſhould be had to the caſes and circumſtances of individuals, and yet affirms, that providence in this preſent ſtate hath no regard to individuals? And he ſeems to make its not extending to individuals here, an argument that it ſhall not extend to them in a future ſtate; for he mentions it as an abſurdity in the Chriſtian ſyſtem, that "the proceedings of the future "ſtate will be the very reverſe of the preſent; "for that then every individual human creature "is to be tried, whereas here they are conſi-"dered only collectively; that the moſt ſecret "actions, nay, the very thoughts of the heart, "will be laid open, and ſentence will be pro-"nounced accordingly *:" Where he ſeems to argue, that becauſe individuals are not called to an account, or rewarded and puniſhed here according to their particular merits or demerits; therefore they ſhall not be ſo hereafter. Whereas the argument ſeems to hold ſtrongly the other way, ſuppoſing the juſtice of divine providence; that ſince juſtice neceſſarily requires that a regard ſhould be had to men's particular actions, caſes, and circumſtances, and ſince there is not an exact diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments to individuals in this preſent ſtate, according to the perſonal merit or demerit of each individual, therefore there ſhall be a future ſtate, in which this ſhall be done, and the righteouſneſs of

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* Vol. V. p. 494.

providence

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providence ſhall be fully manifeſted and vindicated. And it cannot but appear a little extraordinary, that this author ſhould make ſuch a mighty parade of his zeal for vindicating the juſtice of divine providence, when according to his ſcheme the juſtice of providence cannot conſiſtently be ſaid to be exerciſed or diſplay'd, either here or hereafter.

2dly, It is proper farther to obſerve, that what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered with ſo much pomp for vindicating the proceedings of divine providence in the preſent conſtitution of things, hath nothing in it that can be called new, or which had not been ſaid as well, or better, by Chriſtian divines and philoſophers before him. They have frequently ſhewn, that this preſent world is full of the effects and inſtances of the divine goodneſs: That many of thoſe that are called natural evils are the effects of wiſe general laws, which are beſt upon the whole: That the evils of this life are, for the moſt part, tolerable, and overbalanced by the bleſſings beſtowed upon us, which ordinarily ſpeaking are much ſuperior to thoſe evils: That in the preſent conſtitution, virtue has a manifeſt tendency in the ordinary courſe of things to produce happineſs, and vice miſery; and that this conſtitution is the effect of a wiſe and good providence, from whence it may be concluded, that the great Author and Governor of the world approves the one, and diſapproves the other? So that it may be juſtly ſaid in general, that good

and

and virtuous perſons enjoy more true ſatisfaction and happineſs, even in this preſent life, than the bad and vicious. Divines may ſay much more on this head than this author could conſiſtently do. They maintain a providence which extends even to the individuals of the human race: That good men may conſider themſelves as continually under God's wiſe and fatherly care and inſpection: That they may regard the good things they enjoy as the effects of his goodneſs, and are provided with the propereſt conſolations and ſupports under all the evils of this preſent life, being perſuaded, that God who knoweth their circumſtances, will over-rule all theſe things for their benefit; and that they are part of the diſcipline appointed to prepare them for a better ſtate; the proſpects of which diffuſe joy and comfort through all the gloomy ſcenes of adverſity they may have to meet with. But in his ſcheme there is no ſolid foundation for that tranquillity of mind, of which he ſpeaks in ſuch high terms as the inſeparable companion of virtue, and for that hope, which, he ſays, gives a reliſh to all the comforts, and takes off the bitter reliſh from all the misfortunes of life. If providence doth not concern itſelf about individuals, the good man hath no effectual ſupport under his calamities. And it is worthy of our obſervation, that our author himſelf in vindicating the juſtice and goodneſs of providence in this preſent ſtate, is ſometimes obliged to have recourſe to the hypotheſis of a particular providence.

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providence. Some of the anſwers he puts into the mouth of *Balbus*, as what he might have oppoſed to *Cotta*'s harangue againſt providence, proceed upon the ſuppoſition of a providence which hath a regard to the caſes and circumſtances of individuals *. And with regard to public calamities, one of the ways he takes of accounting for them is this, that "they "may be conſidered as chaſtiſements, when "there are any to be amended by partaking in "them, or being ſpectators of them.——And "that they ſhould teach mankind to adore and "fear that providence, which governs the "world by *particular* as well as general diſ-"penſations †."

A third reflection is this, That though it be very true in general, that in the preſent conſtitution of things, virtue hath a manifeſt tendency to promote our happineſs, and vice to produce miſery, yet it cannot be denied, that it often happeneth in particular caſes, that as to the outward diſpenſations of providence, there is not a conſtant and remarkable difference made between the righteous and the wicked here on earth: That perſons of eminent virtue have frequently been overwhelmed with evils and calamities of various kinds, and have periſhed under them, without any recompence of that virtue, if there be no future ſtate: And that wicked men have often been remarkably proſperous, and have met with great ſucceſs in

* Vol. V. p. 412. † *Ib.* p. 380, 381.

their

their undertakings, and have continued proſper- LETTER VIII.
ous to the end of their lives. Theſe things have been obſerved in all ages. And accordingly he expreſly owns, that "the antient "Theiſts were perſuaded, that nothing leſs "than the exiſtence of all mankind in a future "ſtate, and a more exact diſtribution of re- "wards and puniſhments could excuſe the aſ- "ſumed, irregular, and unjuſt proceedings of "providence in this life, on which Atheiſts "founded their objections *." He frequently intimates, that this was one great reaſon of the philoſophers aſſuming the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments: Though ſometimes he ſeems to contradict this, and to ſay, that the heathens did not take in the hypotheſis of a future ſtate in order to vindicate the conduct of divine providence †. But without endeavouring to reconcile this writer to himſelf, which it is often impoſſible to do, we may proceed upon it as a certain thing, that it hath been generally acknowleged in all ages, that good men have been often in a very calamitous condition in this preſent ſtate, and bad men in very proſperous circumſtances. It is true, that as our author obſerves, we may be deceived, and think thoſe to be good men who are not ſo: But in many caſes we may certainly pronounce, that thoſe who by their actions plainly ſhew themſelves to be bad men, the unjuſt, the fraudulent, the cruel and oppreſſive, proſper and flouriſh, whilſt

* Vol. V. p. 308. † Compare *ib.* 238, 487.

men

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men whom it were the height of uncharitableneſs not to ſuppoſe perſons of great goodneſs, integrity, and generous honeſty, ſuffer even by their very virtues, and are expoſed to grievous oppreſſion and reproach, without any redreſs from human judicatories. It is his own obſervation, that "there is room for much contin-"gency in the phyſical and moral world, un-"der the government of a general providence, "and that amidſt theſe contingencies, happi-"neſs, outward happineſs at leaſt, may fall to "the lot of the wicked, and outward unhappi-"neſs to the lot of good men *."

Mr. *Hume* has repreſented this matter with ſpirit and elegance in the twenty-firſt of his moral and political Eſſays. Where he obſerves, That "though virtue be undoubtedly the beſt "choice where it can be attained, yet ſuch is "the confuſion and diſorder of human affairs, "that no perfect œconomy, or regular diſtribu-"tion of happineſs or miſery is in this life ever "to be expected. Not only are the goods of "fortune, and endowments of the body, un-"equally diſtributed between the virtuous and "the vicious; but the moſt worthy character, "by the very œconomy of the paſſions, doth "not always enjoy the higheſt felicity. Though "all vice is pernicious, the diſturbance or pain "is not meaſured out by nature with exact "proportion to the degrees of vice: Nor is the "man of higheſt virtue, even abſtracting from

* Vol. V. p. 485.

"external

" external accidents, always the moſt happy. A gloomy and melancholy temper may be found " in very worthy characters that have a great ſenſe " of honour and integrity; and yet this alone " may embitter life, and render a perſon com- " pletely miſerable. On the other hand, a " ſelfiſh villain may poſſeſs a ſpring and alacrity " of temper, a certain gaiety of heart, which " will compenſate the uneaſineſs and remorſe " ariſing from all the other vices.—— If a man " be liable to a vice or imperfection, it may " often happen, that a good quality which he " poſſeſſes along with it, will render him more " miſerable, than if he were completely vicious. " A ſenſe of ſhame in an imperfect character, is " certainly a virtue, but produces great uneaſi- " neſs and remorſe, from which the abandoned " villain is entirely free *."

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Though I lay no great ſtreſs on Mr. *Hume's* authority, yet I believe this repreſentation will be acknowleged to be agreeable to obſervation and experience. And if it be ſo, what can be more natural or reaſonable, than the hypotheſis of a future ſtate, where the rewards of virtue and puniſhments of vice, ſhall be more equally and regularly proportioned than they can ordinarily be in this preſent ſtate?

It is hard to produce an inſtance of groſſer calumny and abuſe than our author is guilty of, when he advanceth it as a general charge againſt

* Hume's moral and political Eſſays, p. 244, 245.

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the Chriſtian divines, that "they have made a "common cauſe with Atheiſts to attack provi- "dence, and to murmur againſt the neceſſary "ſubmiſſion that they pay." And he gives it as the character of the *Chriſtian*, that "he "goes murmuring and complaining thro' this "life againſt the juſtice of God, and therefore "deſerves little to taſte of his goodneſs in a "future ſtate *." But this is ſtrangely miſre- preſented. The Chriſtian inſtructed by the holy Scriptures believes, that God is perfectly juſt and righteous in all his ways.——He is taught to regard all the good things he enjoys as flowing from God's paternal benignity; all the evils and afflictions he endures, as ordered and governed for the moſt wiſe and righteous ends. If there be any thing in the divine diſpenſations at preſent, which he cannot well account for, or reconcile, he is far from accuſing God, or entertaining a hard thought of his juſtice or goodneſs. He believes, that theſe things are all wiſely ordered, or permitted: That they are what may be expected in a ſtate of trial and diſcipline, and make a part of the ſcheme of divine providence, which will appear, when the whole comes to be viewed in its proper connection and harmony, to have been ordered with the moſt perfect wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and goodneſs. This preſent ſtate only makes a part of the glorious plan; and they are the perſons that defame and miſrepreſent providence, who are for ſeparating

* Bolingbroke's works, Vol. V. p. 486.

and

and disjointing the admirable ſcheme. What a ſtrange perverſion is it to repreſent the hope and expectation which Chriſtians entertain of a future ſtate, as arguing a bad temper of mind, and tending to render them unworthy to taſte of the divine goodneſs hereafter! As if it were a fault and a vice to aſpire to a ſtate where our nature ſhall be raiſed to the perfection of holineſs and virtue, where true piety ſhall receive its proper and full reward, and the glory of the divine perfections ſhall be moſt illuſtriouſly diſplay'd.

As to the nature and extent of thoſe future rewards and puniſhments, they will come more properly to be conſidered when I come to examine the objections he hath advanced againſt the accounts that are given of them in the Goſpel.

The only thing farther which I ſhall at preſent take notice of, is the uſe which he makes of that maxim, That *whatſoever is is right*. He inſinuates as if Chriſtian divines were not for acknowleging, that whatſoever God does is right; which he looks upon to be a moſt certain and important principle; and that upon this principle we ought to reſt ſatisfied, That what is done in this preſent ſtate is right, without looking forward to a future ſtate, or taking it into the account at all.

For the explaining the principle our author mentions, *Whatſoever is is right*, it muſt be obſerved, that it is not to be applied to every particular incident conſidered independently, and as

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confined to the preſent moment, without any dependence on what went before, or follows after. The maxim would not be true or juſt, taken in this view. The meaning therefore muſt be, that whatever is, conſidered as a part of the univerſal ſcheme of providence, and taken in its proper harmony and connection with the paſt and future, as well as with the preſent appointed courſe of things, is rightly and fitly ordered. Thus, *e. g.* ſuppoſe a good man reduced to the greateſt miſery and diſtreſs, and conflicting with the ſoreſt evils and calamities, it is fit he ſhould be ſo, becauſe conſidering that even in its connection, and taking in the paſt and future, it is permitted or appointed for wiſe reaſons, and is therefore beſt upon the whole: But conſidered independently, and as no part of the ſcheme of providence, or as ſeparated from the other parts of that ſcheme, it is not in itſelf the beſt nor fitteſt. This maxim therefore which this writer makes uſe of with a view to ſet aſide a future ſtate, is, if underſtood in that ſenſe in which alone it is true, perfectly conſiſtent with the belief of a future ſtate, and even leadeth us to the acknowlegement of it. If we believe that God always does that which is fitteſt to be done, and yet meet with ſome things which we find it hard to reconcile to our ideas of the divine wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and goodneſs, our perſuaſion, that he always does that which is right, will put us upon endeavouring to reconcile thoſe appearances: And if a probable hypo-

theſis

theſis offers for reconciling them, it is perfectly conſiſtent with the veneration we owe to the Deity to embrace that hypotheſis; eſpecially if it be not arbitrary, but hath a real foundation in the nature of things: And ſuch is the hypotheſis of a future ſtate of retributions. There is great reaſon to believe, that the thinking principle in man is an immaterial ſubſtance quite diſtinct from the body, and which ſhall not be diſſolved with it. And there are many things that ſeem to ſhew he was not deſigned merely for this preſent tranſitory life on earth.——The ſtrong deſire of immortality ſo natural to the human mind; the vaſt capacities and faculties of the human ſoul, capable of making an immortal progreſs in knowlege, wiſdom, and virtue, compared with the ſmall advances we have an opportunity of making in this preſent ſtate; our being formed moral agents, accountable creatures, which ſeems plainly to ſhew, that it was deſigned by the Author of our beings, and who hath given us a law for the rule of our duty, that we ſhould be hereafter called to an account for our conduct; of which we have ſome forebodings in the judgment our own conſciences naturally preſs upon our actions: Theſe and other things that might be mentioned, ſeem to ſhew, that man was not deſigned merely for this preſent ſtate. And ſince there are ſeveral reaſons that lead us to look upon a future ſtate of exiſtence as probable, it is a moſt natural thought, that then the ſeeming inequa-

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lities of this preſent ſtate will be rectified; and that the conſideration of that ſtate is to be taken in in forming a judgment concerning God's providential diſpenſations. And if with all this there be an expreſs revelation from God, aſſuring us of a future ſtate, the evidence is complete, and there is all the reaſon in the world to draw an argument from that ſtate to ſolve preſent contrary appearances.

I am Yours, &c.

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Obſervations on Lord Bolingbroke's *account of the law of nature. He aſſerts it to be ſo plain and obvious to the meaneſt underſtanding that men cannot be miſtaken about it. The contrary ſhewn from his own acknowlegements. He makes ſelf-love the only original ſpring from which our moral duties and affections flow: Yet ſuppoſes univerſal benevolences to be the fundamental law of our nature. He declares that we are obliged by the law of nature to place our hope and truſt in God, and addreſs ourſelves to him. This ſhewn to be inconſiſtent with the principles he had advanced. He aſſerts polygamy to be founded in the law of nature. He will not allow that there is any ſuch thing as natural ſhame or modeſty. The account he gives of the ſanctions of the law of nature conſidered. He admits no ſanctions of that law with reſpect to individuals. The ill conſequences of his ſcheme to the intereſts of morality and virtue repreſented.*

SIR,

FROM the obſervations that have been made in the foregoing letters, I think it ſufficiently appears that Lord *Bolingbroke* hath

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endeavoured to ſubvert, or at leaſt to perplex and confound ſome of the main principles of what is uſually called natural religion. I ſhall now proceed to examine the account he hath given of the law of nature, conſidered as a rule of duty. He frequently ſpeaks in the higheſt terms of the clearneſs, the ſufficiency, and perfection of that law. He repreſents it as the only ſtanding revelation of the will of God to mankind, and which renders every other revelation needleſs. Very learned and able men have treated of the law of nature: But our author ſeems not at all ſatisfied with what they have written on that ſubject. He ſays, "they have been more intent "to ſhew their learning and acuteneſs, than to "ſet their ſubject in a clear and ſufficient light: "----That inſtead of ſetting up a light ſufficient "to enlighten a large room, they go about with "a ſmall taper, and whilſt they illuminate one "corner, darken the reſt:——That they puzzle "and perplex the plaineſt thing in the world, "ſometimes by citations little to the purpoſe, "or of little authority; ſometimes by a great "apparatus of abſtract reaſoning, and by dint "of explanation.——Read *Selden* and *Grotius*, "read *Cumberland*, read *Puffendorf*, if you "have leiſure or patience for it.——There are "many curious reſearches, no doubts, and many "excellent obſervations in theſe writers; but "they ſeem to be great writers on this ſubject "by much the ſame right, as he might be called "a great traveller who ſhould go from *London*

"to

" to *Paris* by the *Cape of Good Hope* *." I think it is not eaſy to convey a more contemptible idea of any writers, than he hath here done of theſe great men. It is to be ſuppoſed therefore, that he propoſes to lead men a more clear and direct way to the knowlege of the law of nature; eſpecially ſince he hath declared, that " all that can be ſaid to any real or uſeful " purpoſe concerning that law, is extremely " plain †." LETTER IX.

Beſides occaſional paſſages in which he makes mention of the law of nature, this is the principal ſubject of ſeveral of the Fragments and Eſſays of which his fifth volume conſiſts, particularly of the third, fifth, ſixth, ſeventh, eighth, ninth, ſixteenth, ſeventeenth, eighteenth, and twenty-ſecond, of theſe Fragments and Eſſays. But all theſe together are far from making up any thing that can with the leaſt propriety be called a treatiſe on the law of nature; and as his Lordſhip generally ſeems to think himſelf above treating things in a methodical way, we are left to collect his ſentiments by comparing ſeveral parts of his works together, and forming a judgment as well as we can. He has neither diſtinctly explained the principles of that law, nor purſued thoſe principles to their regular conſequences, nor formed any deductions from them that can be of any great uſe for the direction and inſtruction of mankind.

* Vol. V. p. 68. † *Ib.* p. 67.

As

LETTER IX. As to the law of nature in general, he tells us, that "the law of nature is the law of reaſon. "A right uſe of that faculty which God has "given us, collects that law from the nature "of things, as they ſtand in the ſyſtem which "he has conſtituted*." Or, as he elſewhere expreſſeth it, "It is a law which God has given "to all his human creatures, enacted in the con- "ſtitution of their natures, and diſcernible by "the uſe of the faculties he has given them §." He calls it "the revelation God has made of his "will by his works. And what is the will of "God, ſaith he, is a queſtion eaſily anſwered. "To anſwer this we need go no higher than the "moral obligations that ariſe in our own ſyſtem, "and of which we have very adequate ideas. "The nature of the human ſyſtem is indepen- "dent on man, and yet he is obliged to derive "the rules of his conduct from it. By employ- "ing our reaſon to collect the will of God from "the fund of our nature phyſical and moral, and "by contemplating frequently and ſeriouſly the "laws that are plainly and neceſſarily deducible "from them, we may acquire not only a par- "ticular knowlege of thoſe laws, but a general, "and, in ſome ſort, an habitual knowlege of "the manner in which God is pleaſed to ex- "erciſe his ſupreme power in this ſyſtem, be- "yond which we have no concern ‡."

* Vol. V. p. 83. § *Ib.* p. 99. ‡ *Ib.* p. 100. See alſo *Ib.* p. 154. 178. 196. 271.

This

This law he repreſents as abſolutely certain, and obvious to all mankind. "Natural reve- LETTER IX.
"lation, for ſo, ſaith he, I will call it, pro-
"duces knowlege, a ſeries of intuitive know-
"lege from the firſt principles to the laſt con-
"cluſions. The phenomena of nature are the
"firſt principles: And reaſon, *i. e.* a real divine
"illumination, leads us from one neceſſary
"truth to another, through the whole courſe
"of theſe demonſtrations.——In all theſe caſes
"we know, we do not believe*." He aſſerts, that "we more certainly know the will of God
"in this way than we can know it in any
"other†." And that "the tables of the na-
"tural law are hung up in the works of God,
"and are obvious to the ſight of all men, ſo
"obvious that no man who is able to read the
"plaineſt characters can miſtake them‡." And accordingly he declares, that "the will of God
"ſignified by the law of nature, and revealed
"by his works, is a revelation that admits of
"no doubt, and ſhews the road to happineſs to
"all mankind§." I ſhall only mention one paſſage more, among many that might be produced to the ſame purpoſe. Having aſſerted, that "natural religion is the original revelation
"which God has made of himſelf, and of his
"will, to all mankind in the conſtitution of
"things, and in the order of his providence;" he obſerves, that "human reaſon is able to

* Vol. IV. p. 276. † *Ib.* p. 287. ‡ Vol. V. p. 153.
§ *Ib.* p. 196.

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" ceivable duty that we owe to God as our Crea-
" tor, and to man as our fellow-creature: That
" this ſyſtem of duty is fully proportioned by
" infinite wiſdom to the human ſtate, and to
" the end of it human happineſs. —Natural
" religion therefore is relatively perfect: It is
" immutable: As long as God and man con-
" tinue to be what they are, and to ſtand in
" the ſame relations to one another." He adds,
" if it does not follow neceſſarily from this,
" ſure I am that it follows probably, that God
" has made no other revelation of himſelf and
" of his will to mankind *." This is evidently the main point our author had in view in extolling ſo mightily as he has done the abſolute perfection, certainty and clearneſs of the law of nature.

From the ſeveral paſſages which have been produced, it appears, that by the law of nature he underſtands what we may collect by our reaſon concerning the will of God, and our duty, from the conſideration of his works, but eſpecially from the conſtitution of the human ſyſtem, or as he expreſſeth it, from the fund of our nature, phyſical and moral. Let us therefore enquire what account he gives of the human ſyſtem. He obſerves, that " man has two principles of
" determination, affections, and paſſions, ex-
" cited by apparent good, and reaſon, which is
" a ſluggard, and cannot be ſo excited. Reaſon

* Vol. V. p. 543, 544.

" muſt

" muſt be willed into action; and as this can- LETTER
" rarely happen, when the will is already de- IX.
" termined by affections and paſſions, ſo when
" it does happen a ſort of compoſition generally
" happens between the two principles: And
" if the affections and paſſions cannot govern
" abſolutely, they obtain more indulgence from
" reaſon than they deſerve; or than ſhe would
" ſhew them if ſhe were entirely free from their
" force, and free from their conduct §." He expreſſly declares, that " the appetites, paſſions,
" and the immediate objects of pleaſure will
" be always of greater force to determine us
" than reaſon ‖." And that " amidſt the con-
" tingencies that muſt ariſe from the conſti-
" tution of every individual, he needs not go
" about to prove that the odds will always
" be on the ſide of appetite; from which af-
" fections ariſe, as affections grow up after-
" wards into paſſions, which reaſon cannot al-
" ways ſubdue in the ſtrongeſt minds, and by
" which ſhe is perpetually ſubdued in the
weakeſt ‡." At the ſame time that he ſpeaks in ſuch ſtrong terms of the great power and prevalency of the appetites and paſſions, he will not allow that the Creator hath implanted in the human mind any thing that can be called a natural ſenſe of good and evil, of right and wrong. He treats thoſe as enthuſiaſts in ethics, and as rendering natural religion ridiculous, who maintain that there is " a moral ſenſe or inſtinct, by

§ Vol. V. p. 150. See alſo *Ib.* p. 116. 137. 227. ‖ *Ib.* p. 267, 268. ‡ *Ib.* p. 479.

" which

LETTER IX. " which men diſtinguiſh what is morally good " from what is morally evil, and perceive an " agreeable or diſagreeable intellectual ſenſation " accordingly *." " This, he ſays, may be ac- " quired in ſome ſort by long habit, and by " true philoſophical devotion, but that it is " whimſical to aſſume it to be natural ‡."

And now we may form ſome judgment, how far our author's declarations concerning the abſolute clearneſs, as well as certainty, of the law of nature are to be depended on which he makes with a view to ſhew that all extraordinary revelation is entirely needleſs.

He tells us, that " the law of nature has all the clearneſs, all the preciſion that God can give, or man deſire." Which he proves, becauſe " the nature of our ſyſtem, as far as the mora- " lity of actions is concerned, is ſufficiently " known to us, and the laws of our nature " conſequently, ſince they reſult from it ‖." It is to be obſerved, that the clearneſs and preci- ſion he here attributes to the law of nature is ſuppoſed by him to be of ſuch a kind as to be obvious to all mankind. And the only way he allows to any of the human race for knowing that law and his own duty, is by ſending him for information concerning it to the works of God, and eſpecially to the human ſyſtem, and the laws that reſult from it. And is this ſo eaſy a task to every man, even the moſt illiterate? Can it be ſaid that this is, as he affirms, " intel-

* Vol. V. p. 86. ‡ *Ib.* p. 479. ‖ *Ib.* p. 96, 97.

" ligible

" ligible at all times, and in all places alike, LETTER
" and proportioned to the meaneſt underſtand- IX.
" ing§?" Is every man well qualified to ſearch into the *fund of his nature phyſical and moral*; and to form his concluſions accordingly, and draw up a ſyſtem of religion, of laws and rules for his own conduct? How can he conſiſtently ſuppoſe, that the human ſyſtem is ſufficiently known to all, when according to him ſome of the wiſeſt men in all ages, and mankind in general, have been miſtaken even in a point of ſuch importance relating to it, as the ſuppoſing the ſoul to be a diſtinct ſubſtance from the body? Beſides which, the knowlege of the human ſyſtem takes in a due conſideration of our ſenſes, reaſon, appetites, and paſſions. All theſe muſt be conſidered, that we may know wherein conſiſteth the proper order and harmony of our powers, which of them are to be ſubordinate, and which to govern; what are the juſt limits of our appetites and paſſions; how far, and in what inſtances they are to be gratified, and how far reſtrained. And is every particular perſon, if left to himſelf, able by the mere force of his own reaſon to conſider and compare all theſe? and from thence to make the proper deductions, and acquire a *particular knowlege*, as our author requires, of thoſe laws that are deducible from this ſyſtem?

He has another remarkable paſſage to the ſame purpoſe which it may be proper to take ſome notice of. " Whether the word of God, ſaith

§ *Ib.* p. 94.

" he,

LETTER IX. "he, be his word, may be, and hath been disputed by Theists: But whether the works of "God be his works, neither has been nor can "be disputed by any such. Natural religion "therefore being founded on human nature, "which is the work of God, and the necessary "conditions of human happiness, which are "imposed by the whole system of it, every man "who receives the law of nature receives it on "his own authority, and not on the authority "of other men known or unknown, and in "their natural state as fallible as himself. It "is not communicated to him only by tradition "and history: It is a perpetual standing revela-"tion, always made, always making, and as "present in these days as in the days of *Adam* "to all his offspring *." Here every man is directed, in forming a scheme of the law of nature for himself, to despise all other authority, and rely wholly on his own. It is even mentioned as an advantage, that he receives it on his own authority, *i. e.* that he has no other proof or authority for it, but the deductions he himself forms by his own reason: Though that reason is, as this writer owns, for the most part influenced and overborne by the appetites and passions. And this is cried up as a standing revelation to all the sons of *Adam*. But if we apply this magnificent talk concerning the divine certainty and clearness of the law of nature, to what our author plainly intends by it, the de-

* Vol. V. p. 92.

ductions drawn by every man for himſelf concerning his duty, and what he thinks moſt conducive to his happineſs, the fallacy of his way of arguing will immediately appear. For though the works of God are certainly the works of God, and it will not be denied that the human nature is his work, it doth not follow that the concluſions formed by every particular perſon from that nature, and from the works of God concerning duty and moral obligation, are to be certainly depended upon. When therefore he aſſerts, that "the contents of the law of nature are objects "of ſuch a certainty, as the author of nature "alone can communicate*," if the deſign be to ſignify, that the judgment every man forms for himſelf by his own reaſon, and upon his own authority, as he expreſſeth it, concerning the law of nature, hath ſuch a divine certainty in it, it is manifeſtly falſe. He confounds the objective certainty of the law as founded in the nature of things, with the certainty of the judgment men form concerning it: Which are very different things. However certain the law of nature is in itſelf, men may greatly miſtake and miſapprehend it. And it is certain in fact that they do ſtand in great need of particular inſtruction to enable them to acquire a right knowlege of it. And ſurely a divine inſtruction concerning it by perſons extraordinarily ſent and commiſſioned to publiſh a revelation of the will of God to mankind, and who give ſufficient proofs of

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* Vol. V. p. 93.

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their divine miſſion, muſt be of the higheſt advantage.

This writer himſelf, though he ſo often extols the abſolute clearneſs, certainty, and perfection of the law of nature, *i. e.* of the judgment men form by reaſon concerning it; yet at other times makes acknowlegements which quite deſtroy the argument he would draw from it againſt the neceſſity or uſefulneſs of extraordinary revelation: He had affirmed in a paſſage cited above, that "natural revelation, for ſo, "ſays he, I will call it, produces a ſeries of in- "tuitive knowlege from the firſt principles to "the laſt concluſions." Where he ſeems to make both the great principles of the law of nature, and the concluſions that are drawn from it, to be infallibly certain. And yet he elſewhere declares, that the laws of nature are general, and intimates that a multitude of falſe deductions, and wrong applications have been often made of that law *. Among ſeveral paſſages to this purpoſe there is one that deſerves particular notice. After having ſaid, that "it "is in vain to attempt to know any thing more than God has ſhewed us in the actual conſtitution of things;" he adds, that "even when we judge "of them thus, and make particular applications "of the general laws of nature, we are very "liable to miſtakes.——That there are things "fit and unfit, right and wrong, juſt and unjuſt "in the human ſyſtem, and diſcernible by hu-

* Vol. V. p. 154.

"man

" man reaſon, as far as our natural imperfections LETTER
" admit, I acknowlege moſt readily. But from IX.
" the difficulty we have to judge, and from the
" uncertainty of our judgments in a multitude
" of caſes which lie within our bounds, I
" would demonſtrate the folly of thoſe who af-
" fect to have knowlege beyond them. They
" are unable on many occaſions to deduce from
" the conſtitution of their own ſyſtem, and the
" laws of their own nature, with preciſion and
" certainty, what theſe require of them; and
" what is right or wrong, juſt or unjuſt for
" them to do *." To this may be added the acknowlegement he hath made, that " the " law of nature is hid from our ſight by all the " variegated clouds of civil laws and cuſtoms. " Some gleams of true light may be ſeen thro' " them: But they render it a dubious light, and " it can be no better to thoſe who have the " keeneſt ſight, till thoſe interpoſitions are re-" moved †." So that after all his boaſts, as if the law of nature were ſo clear and obvious to all men that they cannot miſtake it, he owns it to have been *hid from our ſight*, by the clouds of civil laws and cuſtoms, and that it is render'd a *dubious light*, even to thoſe *who have the keeneſt ſight*. And ſurely nothing can be more proper to remove and diſpel theſe interpoſitions of contrary laws and cuſtoms, than the light of divine revelation enforced by a divine authority. He himſelf obſerves, that " *Euſebius*

* Vol. V. p. 444. † *Ib.* p. 105.

LETTER IX. " in his firſt book of his evangelical preparation " gives a long catalogue of abſurd laws and " cuſtoms, contradictory to the law of nature " in all ages and countries; for a very good " purpoſe, to ſhew in ſeveral inſtances, how " ſuch abſurd laws and cuſtoms as theſe have " been reformed by the Goſpel, that is, by a " law which renewed and confirmed the ori- " ginal law of nature *."

Theſe obſervations may ſuffice with regard to what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered concerning the law of nature in general, and its abſolute certainty and clearneſs to all mankind: I ſhall now proceed to make ſome more particular reflections on the account he gives of the contents of that law, or the duties which are there preſcribed: As alſo of the grounds of the obligation of that law, and the ſanction whereby it is inforced

I. With regard to the contents or matter of the law of nature, he obſerves, that " ſelf-love " directed by inſtinct to mutual pleaſure, made " the union between man and woman. Self- " love made that of parents and children: Self- " love begat ſociability: And reaſon a principle " of human nature as well as inſtinct, improved " it; and extended it to relations more remote, " and united ſeveral families into one commu- " nity, as inſtinct had united ſeveral individuals " into one family." See the third of his Fragments and Eſſays in his fifth volume. And he

* Vol. V. p. 100, 101.

treats

treats this more largely in the ſixth of thoſe Eſſays, where he obſerves, that "there is ſuch a thing "as natural reaſon implanted in us by the author "of our nature; but that reaſon would come "too ſlowly to regulate the conduct of human "life, if the All-wiſe Creator had not implanted "in us another principle, that of ſelf-love; "which is the original ſpring of human actions, "under the direction of inſtinct firſt and reaſon "afterwards*."—"That inſtinct and reaſon "may be conſidered as diſtinct promulgations "of the ſame law. Self-love directs neceſſarily "to ſociability—Inſtinct leads us to it by the "ſenſe of pleaſure, and reaſon confirms us in "it by a ſenſe of happineſs§."—Sociability is "the foundation of human happineſs: Society "cannot be maintained without benevolence, "juſtice, and other ſocial virtues. Thoſe vir-"tues therefore are the foundation of ſociety. "And thus are we led from the inſtinctive to "the rational law of nature.—Self-love ope-"rates in all theſe ſtages. We love ourſelves, "we love our families, we love the particular "ſocieties to which we belong. And our be-"nevolence extends at laſt to the whole race of "mankind. Like ſo many different vortices "the center of all is ſelf-love: And that which "is the moſt diſtant from it is the weakeſt‖."

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It appears from this account of the law of nature, that he makes ſelf-love to be the *original ſpring* of all human actions, the fundamental

* Vol. V. p. 79. § *Ib.* p. 80, 81. ‖ *Ib.* p. 82.

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principle of the law of nature, and center of the moral ſyſtem to which all the lines of it tend, and in which they terminate. And yet he elſewhere calls "univerſal benevolence, benevolence to all rational beings, the great and fundamental principle of the law of nature*." And aſſerts, that "the firſt principle of the religion of nature and reaſon is a ſociability that flows from univerſal benevolence†." In the paſſages above cited, he had expreſly affirmed that ſelf-love begets ſociability, and had reſolved benevolence into ſelf-love as the original principle from which it flows. But here he makes ſociability to flow from univerſal benevolence. I do not well ſee how this can be made to conſiſt upon his ſcheme. Thoſe may juſtly regard univerſal benevolence as a fundamental law of our nature, who ſuppoſe a ſocial principle, and a benevolent diſpoſition, diſtinct from ſelf-love, to be an original diſpoſition, natural to the human heart, and implanted by the author of our beings: But if ſelf-love be, as he repreſents it, the only original ſpring of human actions, and the center of the whole ſyſtem, univerſal benevolence cannot be properly repreſented as the fundamental law of our nature. Upon this ſcheme the private intereſt of the individual, whenever it happens to come in competition with the public good, ought to be preferred. Lord *Bolingbroke* endeavours to anſwer *Carneades*'s argument againſt juſtice, who urged,

* Vol. IV. p. 282. Vol. V. p. 98. † *Ib.* p. 196.

that

that " either there is no ſuch thing as juſtice, or LETTER
" it would be extremely fooliſh, becauſe that IX.
" in providing for the good of others, the juſt
" would hurt themſelves *." This argument ſeems to me to be concluſive upon his Lordſhip's ſcheme. For ſuppoſing, which ſeems to be his ſentiment, that there is no natural ſenſe of right and wrong, of moral beauty and deformity implanted in the human heart: And that at the ſame time a man is perſuaded that providence has no regard to individuals, to their actions, or the events which befal them; and that therefore he has nothing to hope or to fear from God; and that this life is the whole of his exiſtence: And if he is alſo made to think, that ſelf-love is the original ſpring of human actions, and the central point to which all muſt tend: And that a tendency to promote his own happineſs, his preſent happineſs, is what gives the law of nature its obligation, which as ſhall be ſhewn is what Lord *Bolingbroke* avows: Upon theſe principles, if in any particular inſtance an unjuſt action may turn to his own advantage, and he knows he is ſafe in committing it, he is juſtified in doing that action when a ſtrict regard to juſtice, or fidelity to his word and promiſe would do him hurt. For his preſent advantage and intereſt in this uncertain life is what he is to have principally in view, and to which every thing elſe muſt be ſubordinate.

* Vol. V. p. 103.

LETTER IX. In the eleventh of his Fragments and Eſſays, in which he particularly treats of ſociability, he obſerves, that "it is owing to our being determined by ſelf-love to ſeek our pleaſure and "utility in ſociety—And that when theſe ends "are ſufficiently anſwered, natural ſociability "declines, and natural inſociability commences. "The influence of ſelf-love reaches no farther: "And when men are once formed into ſocie-"ties, thoſe ſocieties become individuals, and "thus ſelf-love which promoted union among "men promotes diſcord among them *." So that according to him, ſelf-love firſt produces ſociableneſs, and puts men upon forming ſocieties; and when ſocieties are once formed, this ſame ſelf-love produces unſociableneſs and diſcord between thoſe ſocieties. And if this be the caſe, I cannot ſee how he can maintain, as he ſometimes does, that univerſal benevolence flows from ſelf-love, when according to his account of it, it is only a very limited ſociableneſs which is produced by ſelf-love; and ſelf-love inſtead of promoting an univerſal benevolence, deſtroys it.

With regard to the particular duties included in the law of nature, there is little in theſe Eſſays, that can be of uſe, either to ſhew, what thoſe duties are, or how they are deducible from that law. What he ſaith on this head is for the moſt part very general.

As to the duties we owe to God, he obſerves, that "the religion and law of nature ſhews us

* Vol. V. p. 115.

"the

" the Supreme Being manifeſted in all his works LETTER
" to be the true and only object of our adoration: IX.
" And that it teaches us to worſhip him in ſpi-
" rit and in truth, that is, inwardly and ſin-
" cerely." But he ſeems to confine the worſhip preſcribed in that law to inward worſhip. He adds, that " in the exiſtence God has given us, " and in the benefits which attach us ſtrongly " to it, this ſhews him to be the firſt and greateſt " object of our gratitude: And in the eſtabliſhed " order of things, ſubject to ſo many viciſſi-
" tudes, and yet ſo conſtant; this religion ſhews " him to be the reaſonable as well as neceſſary " object of our reſignation: And finally, in the " wants, diſtreſſes, and dangers which thoſe vi-
" ciſſitudes bring frequently upon us, to be the " comfortable object of our hope——in which " hope, the religion of nature will teach us no " doubt to addreſs ourſelves to the Almighty, " in a manner conſiſtent with an entire reſigna-
" tion to his will, as ſome of the heathens did *." Theſe are undoubtedly important duties. But it is not eaſy to ſee what place there is for make-ing God the comfortable object of our hope in the wants, diſtreſſes, and dangers we are expoſed to, or for addreſſing ourſelves to him in an entire reſignation to his will and to his providence, if he exerciſeth no care of individuals at all, nor concerneth himſelf about their actions, their particular caſes and circumſtances in this preſent ſtate, nor will ever recompence their piety and

* Vol. V. p. 97, 98.

virtue

LETTER IX. virtue in a future one. The ſcheme our author hath advanced on theſe heads appeareth to me to be abſolutely inconſiſtent with what he himſelf here repreſenteth as important duties of the law of nature.

As to other particular duties required in that law, he ſays, "No doubt can be entertained "whether the law of nature forbids idolatry, "blaſphemy, murder, theft, and I think inceſt, "at leaſt in the higheſt inſtance of it *." Theſe things he only mentions; but that which he moſt largely inſiſts upon as a precept of the law of nature is polygamy. This is the ſubject of the ſeventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth of his Fragments and Eſſays. The principal argument which he brings to prove that polygamy is agreeable to the law of nature, and is a duty bound upon us by that law, is that it contributes to the increaſe and propagation of the human ſpecies. He owns that "Monogamy, or the confinement "of one husband to one wife while they both "live, will unite the care of both parents in "breeding up ſubjects of the commonwealth;" but he aſſerts, that "it will not ſerve as effectually "nor in as great numbers, to the begetting "them †." But it would not be a hard matter to ſhew that polygamy, if univerſally allowed, and it muſt be ſo if it were a law of nature, would not tend to the increaſe of mankind upon the whole, but the contrary ‖. Seeing if one man

* Vol. V. p. 156. † *Ib.* p. 163. ‖ See concerning this the Rev. Dean Delany's excellent reflections on Polygamy.

had many wives ſeveral men muſt be without any, conſidering that providence has ordered ſuch an equality in numbers between the ſexes, and that, as hath been obſerved by thoſe who have examined this matter with the greateſt accuracy, there are generally more men born into the world than women. This ſhews that in the order of nature, and according to the preſent conſtitution of things, more than one woman is not ordinarily deſigned for one man. And I believe it will ſcarce be denied to be probable, that twenty men married to twenty women would have more children among them, than one man married to twenty women. The conſtant ordinary courſe of providence throughout the world with reſpect to the proportion between the ſexes, is, as *Moſes* repreſents it to have been in the beginning, one man to one woman. And it is obſervable that according to his account, polygamy had no place either at the firſt original of the human race, or at the reparation of mankind immediately after the deluge, though in both theſe caſes the ſpeedy multiplication of the human ſpecies ſeemed to be neceſſary. If therefore we judge, as Lord *Bolingbroke* would have us judge, of the law of nature by the conſtitution of our ſyſtem, monogamy is more agreeable to that law, and a more perfect inſtitution than polygamy. But I ſhall have occaſion to reſume this ſubject, when I come to conſider his obſervations againſt the Chriſtian law on this account.

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I do not find that he any-where repreſents adultery as a violation of the law of nature. He rather intimates the contrary, when he gives it as a reaſon why in *Greece* and *Rome*, and ſeveral other ſtates, a plurality of wives was prohibited, and monogamy encouraged, "becauſe "notwithſtanding their entering into ſingle mar-"riages, nothing hindered them, nor their wives "neither, except the want of opportunity, from "indulging their luſt with others in ſpite of their "ſacred bonds, and the legal property they "had in one another's perſons." And he thinks it cannot be doubted that ſuch conſiderations have the ſame effect upon Chriſtians, who look upon thoſe marriages to have been inſtituted by God himſelf*. But I am perſuaded the antient *Pagans* would not have alleged or admitted the reaſon he gives for reconciling them to ſingle marriages: As if no man or woman entered into the marriage-bond, but with a reſolution to violate it as often as an opportunity offered. If that had been the caſe, adultery would not have been ſo infamous a thing, nor ſo ſeverely puniſhed, as it was in the beſt ages of *Greece* and *Rome*. Nor were adulteries common among them, till an univerſal diſſoluteneſs and corruption of manners prevailed, which prepared things by degrees for the diſſolution of their ſtate. He plainly ſuppoſes all men and women to be unchaſte; and that there is no ſuch thing as conjugal fidelity and chaſtity either among heathens or Chriſtians.

* Vol. V. p. 167.

Such

Such a way of repreſenting things is generally looked upon as a ſuſpicious ſign of a vicious and corrupt heart, that judges of the reſt of mankind by its own depraved inclinations. And that his Lordſhip had no great notion of the virtue or obligation of chaſtity, farther appears from the account he gives of "the motives of that mo- "deſty, with which almoſt all mankind, even "the moſt ſavage, conceal the parts, and remove "out of ſight to perform the act of generation." He ſays, "the latent principle of this ſhame or "modeſty, is a vanity inherent in our natures, "which makes us fond of ſhewing how ſuperior "we are to other animals, and to hide how "much we participate of the ſame nature." As if the ſavage nations carried their refinements ſo far, which would be an argument againſt eating in open view, ſince in this we equally participate of the ſame nature with other animals. He adds, that "an uncontrouled and undiſturbed "indulgence to their mutual luſt, is one of the "principal reaſons for the ſolitude wherein the "two ſexes affect to copulate." So that this ſhame and modeſty, which forbids public copulations of human creatures like brutes, is at laſt reſolved into an exceſſive prevalence of luſt. He concludes therefore that "this ſhame is ar- "tificial, and has been inſpired by human laws, "by prejudice, and the like*." As to inceſt, he ſeems to think the law of nature forbids none but that of the higheſt kind, *viz.* "the conjunc-

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* Vol. V. p. 174.

"tion

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" tion between fathers and daughters, ſons and " mothers." And whether this is forbidden by that law he is not very poſitive; but inclines to think it is forbidden; not for any repugnancy or abhorrence in nature to ſuch copulations, which he treats as a pretence that ſcarce deſerves an anſwer, but becauſe " as parents are the chief " magiſtrates of families, every thing that tends " to diminiſh a reverence for them, or to con- " vert it into ſome other ſentiment, diminiſhes " their authority, and diſſolves the order of " theſe little commonwealths §." He mentions nations, " among whom no regard was paid to " the degrees of conſanguinity and affinity, but " brothers mixed with ſiſters, fathers with their " daughters, and ſons with their mothers:— " That they were had in abomination by the " *Jews*, who were in return held in contempt " by them and all others:—That two of theſe " nations, the *Egyptians* and *Babylonians*, had " been maſters of the *Jews* in every ſenſe, and " from whom the *Greeks* and *Romans* derived " all their knowlege; and perhaps the firſt uſe " of letters ‖." And he obſerves, that " *Eve* was " in ſome ſort the daughter of *Adam*. She was " literally bone of his bone, and fleſh of his " fleſh." This ſeems to be mentioned by him with a deſign to give ſome ſort of patronage for the conjunction between fathers and daughters. But *Eve* could with no propriety be called the daughter of *Adam*; though they might both

§ Vol. V. p. 175. ‖ *Ib.* p. 172, 173, 175.

be

be called the children of God: *Adam* did not beget or form *Eve*, but God formed them both †." LETTER IX.

He concludes, that "*increaſe and multiply* "is the law of nature. The manner in which "this precept ſhall be executed with the greateſt "advantage to ſociety, is the law of man." So that the only law of nature that he allows in this caſe, is the natural inſtinct to increaſe and multiply. Fornication, adultery, inceſt, are all left at large to political conſiderations, and human laws, and to what men ſhall think moſt for their pleaſure and the propagation of the ſpecies, without any divine law to reſtrain or regulate them: Which is to open a wide door for a licentious indulgence to the carnal appetite.

The laſt thing I propoſed to conſider with regard to Lord *Bolingbroke*'s account of the law of nature is the ground of the obligation of that law, and the ſanctions whereby it is inforced.

As to the ground of its obligation, or from whence the obliging force of that law ariſes, he obſerves, that that which makes it properly obligatory is not its being the will and appointment of God, but its being conducive to human happineſs. To this purpoſe he declares, that "tho' "the Supreme Being willed into exiſtence this "ſyſtem, and by conſequence all the relations "of things contained in it; yet it is not this "will, it is in truth the conſtitution of the "ſyſtem alone, that impoſes theſe laws on man-

† Vol. V. p. 176.

"kind

LETTER IX. kind originally, whatever power made this "ſyſtem."—— "The morality of actions, he "thinks, doth not conſiſt in this, that they are "preſcribed by will, even by the will of God: "But it is this, that they are the means, how-"ever impoſed the practice of them may be, "of acquiring happineſs agreeable to our na-"ture." And he ſeems to find fault with thoſe who "think there can be no law of nature, or "at leaſt that it cannot paſs for a law in the "ſenſe of obliging and binding, without a "God:" Though he owns, "that it is more "fully and effectually ſo to the Theiſt, than to "the Atheiſt *. But though he has here expreſly declared, that it is not the will of God, but it is the conſtitution of the human ſyſtem, which impoſes theſe laws originally on mankind; yet afterwards in oppoſition to *Grotius* he aſſerts the law of nature to be the *poſitive law of God in every ſenſe, a law of will*; and blames that great man, and others, for diſtinguiſhing between the law of nature, and the poſitive law of God to man †.

With regard to the ſanctions of the law of nature, he expreſly affirms, that the penalties which make the ſanction of natural law, affect nations collectively, not men individually ‡. This is not an occaſional thought, but is a fixed part of his ſcheme, and which he frequently repeats §.

* Vol. IV. p. 283, 284. † Vol. V. p. 87. ‡ *Ib.* p. 90.
§ See particularly Vol. IV. p. 288. Vol. V. p. 472, 474, 494, 495.

The

The only penalties or ſanctions which he allows properly to belong to the law of nature, are the public evils which affect nations. With regard to particular perſons there are no divine ſanctions to enforce that law. But the puniſhment of individuals is left wholly to the laws enacted by every community. And it is certain that there are many breaches of the natural law, which do not make men liable to any puniſhment by the civil laws. There is no puniſhment provided by thoſe laws, nor any, according to our author's account, by the law of nature, for ſecret crimes however enormous. Nor do theſe laws ever puniſh internal bad diſpoſitions, any vices of the heart, or irregular and corrupt affections. A man may be ſafely as wicked as he pleaſes, provided he can manage ſo as to eſcape puniſhment by the laws of his country, which very bad men, and thoſe that are guilty of great vices, may eaſily, and frequently do, evade. No other penalties has he to fear (for I do not find that he ever reckons inward remorſe or ſtings of conſcience, among the ſanctions of the natural law) except he happens to be involved in national calamities; among which he mentions *oppreſſion, famine, peſtilence, wars, and captivities*; and in theſe it often happens, that good men as well as the wicked and vicious are involved. So that he allows no puniſhments as proper divine ſanctions of the law of nature, but what are common to thoſe that keep that law, as well as to thoſe who violate it. All

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LETTER IX. that he offers to prove, that this divine ſanction, as he calls it, of the natural law is ſufficient, amounts to this, that the ſanctions of the law of *Moſes*, which is pretended to be a poſitive law given by God to his choſen people conſiſted only in temporal pains and penalties, and thoſe only ſuch as affected the nation in general, and not individuals. This, as far as the law of *Moſes* is concerned, will be afterwards examined. At preſent I ſhall only obſerve, that it is a ſtrange way of arguing, to endeavour to prove, that the ſanction of the law of nature is divine, becauſe it is the ſame with the ſanction of the law of *Moſes*, which in our author's opinion, was not divine†.

Allow me, before I conclude this letter, to make a brief repreſentation of that ſcheme of morality, or of the law of nature, which his principles naturally lead to.

The rule he lays down for judging of the law of nature, or of moral obligation, is this: That man is to judge of it from his own nature, and the ſyſtem he is in. And man according to his account of him is merely a ſuperior animal, whoſe views are confined to this preſent life, and who has no reaſonable proſpect of exiſting in any other ſtate. God has given him appetites and paſſions: Theſe appetites lead him to pleaſure which is their only object. He has reaſon indeed; but this reaſon is only to enable him to provide and contrive what is moſt con-

† Vol. V. p. 91.

ductive to his happiness; that is, what will yield him a *continued permanent series of the most agreeable sensations or pleasures*, which is the definition of happiness*. And if no regard be had to futurity, he must govern himself by what he thinks most conducive to his interest, or his pleasure, in his present circumstances. The constitution of his nature is his only guide: God has given him no other; and concerns himself no further about him, nor will ever call him to an account for his actions. In this constitution his flesh or body is his all: There is no distinct immaterial principle: Nor has he any moral sense or feelings naturally implanted in his heart. And therefore to please the flesh, and pursue its interests, or gratify its appetites and inclinations, must be his principal end. Only he must take care so to gratify them, as not to expose himself to the penalties of human laws, which are the only sanctions of the law of nature for particular persons. He may without any check of conscience debauch his neighbour's wife, when he has an opportunity of doing it safely; and needs be under no restraint to the indulging his lusts from shame or modesty, which is only an *artificial thing*, owing to prejudice or pride. As to the refined sentiments of subjecting the appetites to reason, or the sacrificing a man's own private interest, or that of his family, to the public good of the community, this cannot be reasonably done upon his scheme. It is urged

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* Vol. V. p. 377, 378.

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indeed, that "the good of individuals is ſo "cloſely connected with the good of ſociety, "that the means of promoting the one cannot "be ſeparated from thoſe of promoting the "other §." But though it is generally ſo, yet it may happen in particular caſes, that theſe intereſts may be ſeparated. It may be more for a man's private intereſt to break the laws of his country: And if he can find his own private advantage, or gratify his ambition, his love of power, or of riches, in doing what is prejudicial to the community, there is nothing to reſtrain him from it, provided he can do it ſafely. For ſelf-love is the center of the whole moral ſyſtem, and the more extended the circle is the weaker it grows. So that the love of a man's country muſt be far weaker than his love of himſelf, or regard to his own particular intereſt, which muſt be his ſupreme governing principle and end.

But I ſhall not purſue this any farther. How far ſuch a ſyſtem of morals would be for the good of mankind is eaſy to ſee. And it ſeems to me fairly deducible from Lord *Bolingbroke*'s principles taken in their juſt connection, though I do not pretend to charge his Lordſhip with expreſly acknowleging or avowing all theſe conſequences; and ſometimes he advances what is inconſiſtent with them.

§ Vol. V. p. 103.

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LETTER X.

An examination of what Lord Bolingbroke *hath offered concerning revelation in general. He aſſerts, that mankind had no need of an extraordinary revelation. The contrary fully ſhewn. A divine revelation very needful to inſtruct men in the moſt important principles of religion, eſpecially thoſe relating to the unity, the perfections, and providence of God; the worſhip that is to be rendered to him; moral duty taken in its juſt extent; the chief good and happineſs of man; the terms of our acceptance with God, and the means of reconciliation when we have offended him; and the rewards and puniſhments of a future ſtate. It may be concluded from the neceſſities of mankind, that a revelation was communicated from the beginning: A notion and belief of this has very generally obtained. The wiſeſt men of antiquity ſenſible that bare reaſon alone is not ſufficient to enforce doctrines and laws with a due authority upon mankind. The moſt celebrated philoſophers acknowleged their want of divine revelation. The author's exceptions againſt this examined. Under pretence of extolling the great effects which a true divine revelation muſt have produced, he endeavours to ſhew, that*

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no true divine revelation was ever really given. His ſcheme tends, contrary to his own intention, to ſhew the uſefulneſs and neceſſity of divine revelation.

SIR,

ANY one that reads Lord *Bolingbroke's* works with attention muſt be convinced, that one principal deſign he had in view, was to deſtroy the authority of divine revelation in general, and of the *Jewiſh* and Chriſtian in particular. I ſhall conſider what he hath offered with regard to each of theſe. And ſhall begin with what relates to divine revelation in general.

As to the poſſibility of an extraordinary revelation communicated from God to men, his Lordſhip hath no-where thought fit expreſly to deny it: Though he has made ſome attempts which ſeem to look that way: He frequently treats the notion of communion with God, and communications from God to men, as a great abſurdity, and the ſuppoſition of which is wholly owing to the pride of the human heart; and has declared, that he "cannot compre-"hend the metaphyſical or phyſical influence of "ſpirits, ſuggeſtions, ſilent communications, "injection of ideas. —— And that all ſuch in-"terpoſitions in the intellectual ſyſtem, cannot "be conceived without altering, in every ſuch "inſtance, the natural progreſſion of the hu-"man

"man understanding, and the freedom of the "will *." Yet in a long digression about inspiration, in his *Essay concerning the nature, extent, and reality, of human knowlege*, after having done what he could to expose and ridicule it, he expressly owns, that "an extraordinary action of God on the human mind, "which the word inspiration is now used "to denote, is not more inconceivable than "the ordinary action of mind on body, or "of body on mind." — And that "it is impertinent to deny the existence of any phenomenon, merely because we cannot account "for it." But he urges, that it would be "silly "to assume inspiration to be true, because God "can act mysteriously, *i. e.* in ways unknown "to us on his creature man †." Nor was any of the divines, whom he treats on all occasions with so much contempt, ever so silly, as to assume inspiration to be true, merely because it is possible. The actual truth of it must be proved by other arguments.

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I shall therefore take it for granted, that an extraordinary revelation from God to men for instructing and directing them in the knowlege of important truth, of his will and their duty, is possible: And that such a revelation might be so circumstanced, as to be of real and signal advantage, our author himself seems sometimes willing to allow. After having observed, that

* Vol. V. p. 414, 415. — See concerning this above Let. VII. p. 172, 173. † Vol. III. p. 468.

LETTER XX. we cannot be obliged to believe against reaſon," he adds, that "when a revelation hath all the "authenticity of human teſtimony, when it "appears conſiſtent in all its parts, and when it "contains nothing inconſiſtent with any real "knowlege we have of the ſupreme all-perfect "Being, and of natural religion, ſuch a revela- "tion is to be received with the moſt profound "reverence, with the moſt intire ſubmiſſion, "and with the moſt unfeigned thankſgiving *." This goes upon a ſuppoſition that an extraordinary revelation from God is not only poſſible, but may be of ſignal benefit to mankind; and if really communicated, ought to be received with great thankfulneſs. And he declares, that he does not "preſume to aſſert, that God has "made no ſuch particular revelations of his "will to mankind." Though he adds, that "the opinion that there have been ſuch revela- "tions, is not in any degree ſo agreeable to "the notions of infinite knowlege and wiſdom, "as the contrary opinion †."

What he principally bends himſelf to prove, is, that mankind had no need of ſupernatural revelation; and that therefore it is no way probable, that God would extraordinarily interpoſe to give ſuch diſcoveries of his will. For this purpoſe he mightily extols the abſolute clearneſs and perfection of the law of nature; from whence, he thinks, it follows, "that God has

* Vol. IV. p. 279. —— See alſo Vol. V. p. 201.

† *Ib.* p. 544.

"made

"made no other revelation of himſelf, and of his will to mankind." Many of the Fragments and Eſſays in his fifth volume are particularly intended to invalidate what Dr. *Clarke* had urged to ſhew the need the world ſtood in of a divine revelation. See particularly from the twenty-third to the twenty-eighth of his Fragments and Eſſays; as alſo the thirty-third and thirty-fourth. But if we abſtract from the overbearing confidence, and aſſuming air, ſo familiar to Lord *Bolingbroke*, we ſhall find very little in thoſe Eſſays, which is of any conſequence againſt what that very learned writer had advanced. LETTER X.

The reflections that were made in my laſt letter on what his Lordſhip had offered concerning the abſolute clearneſs of the law or religion of nature to all mankind, might ſuffice to ſhew, that there is no juſt foundation for the inference he would draw from it. But it will be proper to enter upon a more particular and diſtinct conſideration of this matter. And to ſet it in a fair light, I ſhall mention ſome things of high importance to mankind, with regard to which they ſtand in great need of particular inſtruction, and of having them cleared and aſcertained by a divine revelation. Such are the articles relating to the unity, the perfection, and providence of God, the worſhip that is to be rendered to him, moral duty taken in its juſt extent, the chief good and happineſs of man, the terms of our acceptance with God, and the means of reconciliation

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conciliation when we have offended him, and the rewards and punishments of a future state. *

1. The first and fundamental principle of all religion relates to the unity, the perfections and providence of the one true God, the supreme original cause of all things, the Maker and Governor of the world. This is justly represented by our author as the *angular stone* of religion. And it comes to us confirmed by so many convincing proofs, that one would have been apt to expect that all mankind in all ages should have agreed in acknowleging it. And yet certain it is, that there is scarce any thing in which they have fallen into more pernicious errors, than in their notions relating to this great and fundamental article. This writer finds great fault with Mr. *Locke* for asserting in his *Reasonableness of Christianity*, that the heathens were deficient in the first article of natural religion, the knowlege of one God the Maker of all things. And yet this is no more than what Lord *Bolingbroke* himself acknowleges in strong terms. He observes, that "though the first "men could doubt no more, that some cause "of the world, than that the world itself ex"isted, yet a consequence of this great event, "and of the surprize, ignorance, and inexpe"rience, of mankind must have been much "doubt and uncertainty concerning the first "cause *: That the variety of the phenomena "which struck their sense would lead them to

* Vol. III. p. 253.

"imagine

" imagine a variety of cauſes. — That accord- LETTER
" ingly polytheiſm and idolatry prevailed almoſt X.
" every where, and therefore ſeems more con-
" formable to human ideas abſtracted from the
" firſt appearance of things, and better propor-
" tioned by an analogy of human conceptions,
" to the uncultivated reaſon of mankind, and
" to underſtandings not ſufficiently informed."
— He adds, that " polytheiſm, and the con-
" ſequence of it idolatry, were avowed and
" taught by legiſlators and philoſophers, and
" they prevailed more eaſily becauſe they were
" more conformable to the natural conceptions
" of the human mind, than the belief of one
" firſt, intelligent cauſe, the ſole Creator, Pre-
" ſerver, and Governor of all things *." And
though he inſinuates, that " afterwards, when
" nations became civilized, and wiſe conſtitu-
" tions of governments were formed, men could
" not be ignorant of this great principle," yet
he owns, that " the vulgar among the *Greeks*
" and *Romans*, and all the learned nations of
" the Eaſt, acknowleged a multitude of divini-
" ties, to which they aſcribed every excellency
" and every defect of their own nature †."
He endeavours indeed to apologize for them,
by ſaying, that " the worſhip of this multiplicity
" of Gods did not interfere with the ſupreme
" Being in the minds of thoſe that worſhipped
" them ‡." But in plain contradiction to this,

* Vol. III. p. 259, 260. † Vol. IV. p. 199, 200.
‡ Vol. V. p. 305.

" he

LETTER X. "he elſewhere ſaith, that "they loſt ſight of "him, and ſuffered imaginary beings to inter-"cept the worſhip due to him alone *." And ſpeaking of the croud of imaginary divinities among the heathens, ſuperceleſtial and celeſtial Gods, whole Gods, and half Gods, *&c.* he ſays, that "they intercepted the worſhip of the ſu-"preme Being; and that this monſtrous aſ-"ſemblage made the object of vulgar adora-"tion †." And indeed nothing can be more evident than it is from all the remaining monuments of Paganiſm, that the public worſhip preſcribed and eſtabliſhed by their laws was paid to a multiplicity of deities; nor was there any injunction in any of their laws, that the ſupreme God, and he only, was to be adored. The legiſlators, by his own acknowlegement, "thought it dangerous to cure, and uſeful to "confirm, the popular ſuperſtition ‡."

He is pleaſed indeed to give a magnificent account of the Pagan myſteries, as what were intended by the heathen legiſlators for reforming the manners and religion of the people. He aſſerts as poſitively as if he knew it, that "there "are good grounds to be perſuaded, that the "whole ſyſtem of polytheiſm was unravelled "in the greater myſteries, or that no more of "it was retained than was conſiſtent with mo-"notheiſm, with the belief of one ſupreme "ſelf-exiſtent Being." And yet he ridicules thoſe who pretend to give a minute and cir-

* Vol. IV. p. 80. † *Ib.* p. 461. ‡ *Ib.* p. 51.

cumſtantial

cumſtantial account of thoſe myſteries, as if they had aſſiſted at the celebration of them. LETTER X.

"Theſe rites, he ſays, were kept ſecret, under "the ſevereſt penalties, above two thouſand "years. How then can we hope to have them "revealed to us now*?" He owns however, that "the vulgar Gods ſtill kept their places "there, and the abſurdities of polytheiſm were "retained, however mitigated:" And that "the leſſer myſteries preſerved, and the greater "tolerated the fictitious divinities which ſuper-"ſtition and poetry had invented, ſuch as "*Jupiter*, *Mercury*, and *Venus*, as well as the "rites and ceremonies inſtituted in honour of "them, which, he ſays, were practiſed even "by thoſe who were conſummated in the "greater myſteries." And that thus it was particularly in the *Eleuſinian* myſteries, which were the moſt ſacred of them all †. It gives one no very advantageous notion of the nature and deſign of thoſe myſteries, that *Socrates* would not be initiated in hem. And certain it is, that notwithanding this boaſted expedient, the people, particularly the *Athenians*, who were remarkably ſtrict in the celebration of thoſe myſteries, ſtill grew more and more addicted to their ſuperſtitions and idolatries, which were never at a greater height than when Chriſtianity appeared.

With regard to the philoſophers, he tells us, "they knew as well as we know, that there is

* Vol. IV. p. 58. † *Ib.* p. 74.

"a firſt

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" a firſt intelligent Cauſe of all things, and that " the infinite wiſdom and power of this being " made and preſerves the univerſe, and that his " providence governs it *." But it cannot be denied, that ſome whole ſects of them did not acknowlege the one ſupreme God, the Maker and Governor of the world: Others of them, as the Sceptics and Academics, repreſented theſe things as matters of doubtful diſputation. And as to thoſe of them who acknowleged the exiſtence of the *monad* or unity, he himſelf tells us, that " they neglected to worſhip him, and " conformed to the practice of idolatry, though " not to the doctrines of polytheiſm †." And ſuch perſons were certainly very unfit to inſtruct and reform mankind in this important article. And after giving a very lively deſcription of the prevailing polytheiſm and idolatry, he adds, that " thus the vulgar believed, and thus the " prieſts encouraged, whilſt the philoſophers, " overborne by the torrent of polytheiſm, ſuf- " fered them thus to believe, in ages where " true Theiſm was reputed Atheiſm ‡." Some of the greateſt philoſophers were of opinion, that God was not to be named, or diſcourſed of among the vulgar, becauſe they were not capable of forming a juſt notion of him. *Plato* in his book of laws did not preſcribe to the people the worſhip of the one Supreme God, becauſe he looked upon him to be incomprehenſible: And that what he is, or how he is to

* Vol. V. p. 217. † Vol. IV. p. 48. ‡ *Ib.* p. 200.

be

be worſhipped, is not to be deſcribed or de- LETTER
clared. But he appointed twelve ſolemn feſti- X.
vals to be obſerved, to the honour of the twelve principal Gods, and propoſed the worſhip of the ſtars, whoſe divinity he recommended. See his eighth book of laws, and his *Epinomis*, or appendix to his book of laws.

There was need therefore of an extraordinary divine interpoſition to awaken the attention of mankind to this great and fundamental article of all religion. To divine revelation it was owing, that the belief and acknowlegement and adoration of the one true God, and of him only, was eſtabliſhed among the *Jews*, whilſt the learned and civilized nations all around them were immerſed in the moſt ſtupid idolatry and polytheiſm. And this writer acknowleges, that "our Saviour found the world "in a ſtate of error concerning this firſt prin- "ciple of natural religion: And that the ſpread- "ing of Chriſtianity has contributed to deſtroy "polytheiſm and idolatry *."

As the exiſtence and unity of the one true God, ſo his attributes and perfections, and his governing providence, are of high importance to be clearly and certainly known. With regard to the divine attributes and perfections, Lord *Bolingbroke* obſerves, that "though The- "iſts will concur in aſcribing all poſſible per- "fections to the ſupreme Being, yet they will "always differ when they deſcend into any de-

* Vol. IV. p. 243.

"tail

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" tail, and pretend to be particular about them; " as they have always differed in their notions " of thoſe perfections *." A revelation from God therefore in which he declares his own divine attributes and perfections muſt be of great advantage to mankind. And it is what one ſhould think every true Theiſt would wiſh for, that God would be graciouſly pleaſed to make a diſcovery of himſelf, and of his own glorious perfections, which may direct and aſſiſt men in forming juſt and worthy notions of them, eſpecially of what it moſt nearly concerneth us to know, his moral attributes.

And as to the knowlege and belief of his governing providence, in this alſo the heathens were greatly deficient. He obſerves, ſpeaking of ſome of the philoſophers who acknowleged the *monad*, or firſt unity, that " they reduced him " in ſome ſort to a non-entity, an abſtract or " notional Being, and baniſhed him almoſt en- " tirely out of the ſyſtem of his works †." *Tacitus*, having repreſented it as uncertain, whether human affairs were governed by fate, immutable neceſſity, or by chance, obſerves, That the wiſeſt of the antients were of different ſentiments about it; and that many had this opinion deeply fixed in their minds, that neither our beginning, nor our end, nor men at all, were minded by the Gods.

* Vol. V. p. 235. † Vol. IV. p. 466.

Mihi haec ac talia audienti in incerto judi- LETTER
cium eſt, fatone res humanæ, et neceſſitate immu- X.
tabili, an forte volvantur; quippe ſapientiſſi-
mos veterum, quiqui eorum ſectam æmulantur,
diverſos reperies, at multis inſitam opinionem
non initia noſtra, non finem, non denique homi-
nes diis cura. TACIT. Annal. *lib.* 6.

Some, like our author, who pretended to own a general, denied a particular providence, which extends to the individuals of the human race, and under pretence of high thoughts of the divine majeſty, were for ſecluding him from any concern with human actions or affairs. This then is another matter of great importance, in which an extraordinary revelation from God would be of ſignal uſe. For if he ſhould condeſcend by any well-atteſted revelation to aſſure men of his concern even for the individuals of mankind, to declare his kind and gracious intentions towards them, and his cognizance of their actions, and the events that relate to them, this would greatly contribute to remove their doubts, and would lay the foundation for an ingenuous confidence, an intire reſignation, a chearful hope, and ſteady dependence.

It appears, from theſe ſhort hints, of how great advantage a well-atteſted revelation from God might be for inſtructing us in the certain knowlege of God, of his attributes, and his providence; things of the higheſt moment in

LETTER X. religion, and on which the duty and happiness of mankind in a great measure depend.

2dly, Another thing that it is proper to observe here is, that a divine revelation is very needful to teach men not only to know and acknowlege the one true God, his attributes, and providence, but to instruct them how to worship him in an acceptable manner. Dr. *Clarke* had urged, that "bare reason cannot discover in "what manner, and with what kind of service "God will be worshipped." Lord *Bolingbroke* takes notice of this, and in answer to it observes, that "bare reason cannot discover how "any external service that man can pay should "be acceptable to the supreme and all-perfect "Being." He acknowleges, that an inward adoration, a gratitude to God for his benefits, and resignation to his providence, is necessary *; and that the law of nature teaches us "to wor"ship God in spirit and in truth, that is, in"wardly and sincerely †." He seems to confine the worship required in the law of nature to inward worship, the devotion of the heart. But if it be necessary that men should worship the supreme Being inwardly, it seems highly proper that there should be some outward acts of religious homage, openly expressive of that inward adoration, reverence, and gratitude. Without some such external acts of worship, men cannot join in social acts of devotion, or in rendering to God public worship, without which scarce

* Vol. V. p. 208. † *Ib.* p. 98.

any

any appearance of religion can be maintained in the world. It is the voice of nature and reason, in which all mankind have generally agreed, that there ſhould be external as well as internal worſhip rendered to God, and that there ſhould be ſacred rites appointed for the better regulating and ordering that external worſhip. Accordingly he owns, that "the "beſt and wiſeſt of the heathens approved the "political inſtitutions of an external ſervice, as "far as they helped to keep up a lively ſenſe of "theſe duties in the minds of men, and to "promote the practice of them *:" And he had declared before, that "there may be laws and "inſtitutions relating to ſuch outward rites "and obſervances, which may be proper and "even neceſſary means to promote the obſerva-"tion of thoſe duties." But he will not allow that "any ſuch laws can be divine ordinances; "they can only paſs for human inſtitutions †." But I cannot ſee upon what foundation it can be pretended, that God cannot inſtitute ordinances relating to the external rites of divine worſhip, when it is owned, that ſuch ordinances may be inſtituted by men, and may be uſeful to keep up a lively ſenſe of the great duties of religion in the minds of men, and to promote the obſervation and practice of them. It is undeniably manifeſt from the experience and obſervation of all ages, that there is nothing in which men have been more apt to err, than in

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* Vol. V. p. 208. † *Ib.* p. 98.

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what regards the external rites of religious worſhip, and that when left merely to human imagination and invention, theſe things have often hindered inſtead of promoting the main ends of all religion: This ſhews how needful it was that God ſhould himſelf inſtitute that external religious ſervice, which is ſo neceſſary, and in which yet mankind has been ſo prone to fall into the errors and extravagances of ſuperſtition. Our author himſelf takes notice of "the numberleſs ridiculous and cruel rites of Paganiſm, "which were held neceſſary to obtain the fa"vour, and avert the anger, of Heaven *." And ſurely there could not be a more proper and effectual preſervative againſt theſe abſurd ſuperſtitions, than for God to inſtitute the external rites of his own worſhip, and for men to keep cloſe to his inſtitutions. This was certainly one valuable end for which we may ſuppoſe it proper that God ſhould extraordinarily interpoſe to reveal his will to mankind, *viz.* for directing them in the external worſhip he would have rendered to him, that it might be regulated in ſuch a manner, as to be a fit means of promoting inward worſhip, and anſwering the main ends of religion.

3dly, Another thing of great importance to mankind to know, and in which a revelation from God is very needful, and of ſignal uſe, is moral duty taken in its juſt extent. Lord *Bolingbroke* himſelf repreſents it as taking in our duty towards

* Vol. V. p. 208.

God

God and man, according to the different relations in which we ſtand to both *. To which may be added, the duties and virtues which relate to ſelf-government, and the conducting and regulating our own appetites and paſſions. Now the only way we have of being fully inſtructed and directed in the knowlege and practice of our duty, if all regard to extraordinary divine revelation be thrown out of the caſe, is either for every man to collect the whole of his duty for himſelf merely by the force of his own reaſon and obſervation, or to follow the inſtructions and directions of philoſophers and moraliſts, or the inſtitutions of civil laws. LETTER X.

As to the firſt, there are many paſſages in our author's writings, that repreſent the law of nature in its whole extent, as ſo clear and obvious to the meaneſt underſtanding, that man cannot be miſtaken in it. He frequently talks as if every man was able without any inſtruction; by conſidering the works of God, and the conſtitution of the human ſyſtem, to furniſh out a ſcheme of natural religion for himſelf, including the main principles and duties of the law of nature. But this pretence is ſo contrary to matter of fact, and to the experience and obſervation of all ages, and has been ſo often expoſed, that I need not take any farther pains beſides the hints given in my former letter, to ſhew the abſurdity of it, eſpecially as I had occaſion to conſider it at large in the anſwer to *Tindal*.

* Vol. V. p. 154, 543, 544.

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The bulk of mankind therefore muſt be ſent for the knowlege of their duty, either to the inſtructions of their teachers and wiſe men, or to the inſtiturions of civil laws.

As to the former, if by teachers be meant the heathen prieſts, as diſtinguiſhed from the philoſophers (though our author ſays, that in the earlieſt ages they were the ſame), I believe thoſe of his ſentiments will eaſily allow, that they were not very proper to inſtruct mankind in the right knowlege of religion, and in the true doctrine of morals. But with regard to the philoſophers, though he repreſents them as *venders of falſe wares*, and frequently ſpends whole pages in invectives againſt them, yet when he has a mind to ſhew that there was no need of a divine revelation, he thinks fit to repreſent them as very proper and ſufficient guides, and inſtructors to mankind. Dr. *Clarke*, in his evidences of natural and revealed religion, had offered ſeveral conſiderations to prove that they were not ſo. Lord *Bolingbroke* endeavours to take off the force of his obſervations, eſpecially in the twenty-third, twenty-fifth, and twenty-ſixth of his Fragments and Eſſays. And whereas that learned writer had aſſerted, that "the heathen "philoſophers were never able to prove clearly "and diſtinctly enough to perſons of all capa- "cities the obligations of virtue, and the will "of God in matters of morality——And that "they were not able to frame to themſelves any "complete, and regular, and conſiſtent ſcheme

or

or ſyſtem of things." In oppoſition to this, his LETTER Lordſhip affirms, that " there is no one moral X. " virtue, which has not been taught, explained, " and proved, by the heathen philoſophers, both " occaſionally and purpoſely——That they all " agreed, that the practice of virtue was of ne- " ceſſary and indiſpenſable obligation, and that " the happineſs of mankind depended upon it, " in general, and in particular——And that " they all agreed alſo what was virtue, and what " was vice *." And he again inſiſteth upon it, that " there is no one moral precept in the " whole Goſpel which was not taught by the " philoſophers——And that this is ſtrongly and " largely exemplified by *Huetius* in the third " book of his *Alnetanæ Quæſtiones.*" And he blames Dr. *Clarke* for concealing it †.

There are two obſervations which I ſhall make upon what his Lordſhip hath here offered.

The firſt is this; That if it were true, that there is no moral precept enjoined in the Goſpel, but what may be found in the writings of ſome one or other of the heathen philoſophers, this would not be ſufficient to inforce thoſe duties upon mankind, or to convince them of their obligations to perform them. When ſo many of the philoſophers writ upon moral ſubjects, it may be ſuppoſed, that one or other of them might, by a happy conjecture, light upon ſome of the moſt ſublime precepts of the Goſpel-morality. But what was it to mankind what a particular philo-

* Vol. V. p. 204, 205. † *Ib.* p. 218.

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ſopher, or even ſect of philoſophers, maintained, or taught in their ſchools? They were not the public teachers of religion; and was it likely that their refined ſpeculations, uninforced by any authority, and contradicted by others among themſelves, ſhould have any great influence upon mankind, and be regarded by them as divine laws, eſpecially with regard to matters in which the gratification of their appetites and paſſions was concerned, and their own prevailing inclinations were to be reſtrained or governed? They might, after hearing the reaſonings of the philoſophers, think they were not obliged to govern themſelves by their dictates, however plauſible, and ſeemingly rational. Whereas a divine revelation clearly aſcertaining and determining their duty in plain and expreſs propoſitions, would carry far ſtronger conviction, and when received and believed would leave no room to doubt of their obligation. And he himſelf ſeems to acknowlege the uſefulneſs of the Chriſtian revelation *to inforce the practice of morality by a ſuperior authority* *.

My ſecond reflection is this; That what this writer aſſumes as true is evidently falſe, *viz.* that the philoſophers taught the whole of our duty in the ſame extent as it is taught in the Goſpel. Moral duty, by his own account of it, comprehendeth the duty we owe to God as well as to our fellow-creatures. As to the ſocial and civil duties, on which the peace and order of po-

* Vol. V. p. 294.

litical societies immediately depends, these were generally acknowleged by the several sects of philosophers; though the regard that was paid by the people to those duties, was more the effect of civil laws, than of the doctrines and dictates of the philosophers. But as to that part of our duty which relates to God, with what face or consistency can it be pretended, that this was taught by the philosophers in the same extent that it is in the Gospel? Our author makes the adoration of the one true God, and of him only, to be a fundamental obligation of the law of nature, and idolatry to be forbidden in that law. And certain it is, that the most celebrated philosophers, instead of instructing the people aright in this important part of their duty, fell in themselves with the common superstition and idolatry, and directed men to conform in their religious worship to the rites and laws of their several countries; by which polytheism was established, and the public worship was directed to a multiplicity of deities. LETTER X

And as to that part of duty which relateth to the government of the appetites and passions, it is evident the philosophers were far from being agreed what was virtue, and what was vice. Some were for giving much greater indulgence than others to the fleshly sensual appetites and passions; and even the unnatural sin was not only permitted, but recommended, by some of them who were of great name.

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He affirms, that "of a moral kind there were, "properly ſpeaking, no diſputes among philo- "ſophers. They were diſputes about inſigni- "ficant ſpeculations, and no more. For the "morality of *Zeno*, and of *Epicurus*, reduced "to practice, were the ſame *." As if it were a trifling diſpute, whether the world was formed by a moſt wiſe, benign, and powerful Cauſe and Author, or by a fortuitous jumble of atoms: Whether the world and mankind are governed by a moſt wiſe and righteous providence, or whether there is no providence of God at all with regard to human affairs. It is evident, that ſubmiſſion to God, dependence upon his providence, gratitude for his benefits, and reſignation to his will, concerning which ſome of the Stoics ſaid excellent things, could make no part of the morality of *Epicurus*. Thus were the philoſophers divided in the moſt important points of religion, and conſequently in the duties reſulting from it.

But what the philoſophers were not qualified to do was perhaps effected by the legiſlators, and the inſtitutions of civil laws. This is what our author ſeems to lay the principal ſtreſs upon. He obſerves, that "ſome few particular men may "diſcover, explain, and preſs upon others the "moral obligations that are incumbent upon "all, and our moral ſtate will be little improved "by it. But that for this purpoſe governments

* Vol. V. p. 219.

"have

" have been inſtituted, laws have been made, LETTER
" cuſtoms eſtabliſhed, and men have been de- X.
" terred from immorality, by various puniſh-
" ments which human juſtice inflicts *." Where he ſuppoſes human governments and laws to be the only effectual means for the ſecurity and improvement of virtue. But it is manifeſt, that, as I had occaſion to obſerve before, the civil laws of any community are very imperfect meaſures of virtue, or moral obligation. A man may obey thoſe laws, and yet be far from being truly virtuous, he may not be obnoxious to the penalties of thoſe laws, and yet be a very vicious and bad man. Some of the moſt worthy and excellent affections and diſpoſitions are unrewarded by thoſe laws; and ſome of the worſt affections unpuniſhed. The heart, the proper ſeat of virtue and vice, is not within the cognizance of civil laws, or human governments. And what farther ſhews, that civil laws and cuſtoms are not to be depended upon for direction in matters of morality is, that it has often happened, that thoſe laws and cuſtoms have been contrary to the rules of real religion and virtue. This writer indeed has taken upon him to aſſert, that " whatever violations of the law
" of nature may have been committed by parti-
" cular men, yet none that were deemed to be
" ſuch, and perhaps few that might be called
" worthy ſuch, have been enacted into laws,
" or have grown up into eſtabliſhed cuſtoms †."

* Vol. V. p. 480, 481. † *Ib.* p. 151.

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And that "the tables of the natural law, which "are hung up in the works of God, are obvious "to the ſight of all men; and therefore no "political ſociety ever formed a ſyſtem of laws "in direct and avowed contradiction to them *." But though no legiſlators ever declared in plain terms, that the laws they enacted were contrary to the law of nature, which it were abſurd to ſuppoſe, yet that many laws have been enacted which were really contrary to that law, is both undeniably evident from many well known inſtances of ſuch laws, and is what he himſelf is obliged to acknowlege. He obſerves, that "the "law of nature has been blended with many "abſurd and contradictory laws in all ages and "countries, as well as with cuſtoms, which, if "they aroſe independent on laws, have ob-"tained the force of laws†:" And that "er-"rors about the law of nature, and contradi-"ctions to it abound, and have always abound-"ed, in the laws and cuſtoms of ſociety ‡."

Laying all theſe things together, it is manifeſt, that men ſtood in great need of a divine revelation, to give them a clear and certain direction concerning moral duty taken in its juſt extent. The laws of nature, according to our author, are general, and men have been always very prone to make wrong deductions from them. And therefore if God ſhould be pleaſed in a way of extraordinary revelation to give a

* Vol. V. p. 153. † *Ib.* p. 100. ‡ *Ib.* p. 153.—— See alſo *Ib.* p. 197, 201.

ſyſtem

ſyſtem of laws to mankind, plainly pointing out the particulars of their duty, and determining it by his own divine authority, whereby even the vulgar part of mankind might be certainly aſſured of their duty in the moſt important inſtances, and what it is that God requireth of them; this would both give them the beſt direction, and would, where really believed and received, have an influence in binding their moral obligations upon them, which could not be expected, either from the dictates of philoſophers, or the force of human laws. And accordingly, ſome of the wiſeſt lawgivers of antiquity, in order to give their laws greater authority on the minds of men, endeavoured to make them paſs upon the people for divine. And this writer himſelf declares, that "nothing "may ſeem in ſpeculation ſo proper to inforce "moral obligation, as a true revelation, or a "revelation believed to be true *." Mr. *Locke* in his *Reaſonableneſs of Chriſtianity* hath fully conſidered this matter; where he hath ſhewn the inſufficiency of human reaſon, unaſſiſted by revelation, in its great and proper buſineſs of morality. His Lordſhip has taken ſome notice of this. But the account he is pleaſed to give of Mr. *Locke*'s argument is ſo poor and trifling, that though it be as fine a piece of reaſoning as can be met with on this ſubject, it is hard to know it in his repreſentation of it. This any man will be convinced of that compares it as it

* Vol. V. p. 268.

ſtands

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ſtands in Mr. *Locke*'s works, Vol. II. p. 573, *et ſeq.* Edit. Fol. 1740. with what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered upon it, Vol. IV. p. 295, 296.

4thly, It is a point of great importance to mankind to be inſtructed to form right notions of happineſs, or wherein their chief good, and the proper felicity of the human nature, doth conſiſt. His Lordſhip hath taken notice of what Dr. *Clarke* had obſerved, that, according to *Varro*, "there were no leſs than two hundred and "fourſcore different opinions about what was "the chief good, or final happineſs of man." He ſays, that "there were ſo many may be doubted; "but that they muſt have been extremely various, "is certain. The *ſummum bonum*, or ſupreme "good of man, as it was underſtood and taught "by the heathen philoſophers, was a ſubject "wherein every man had a right to pronounce "for himſelf, and no man had a right to pro-"nounce for another. Theſe diſputes were there-"fore very trifling *." But certainly if there be any enquiry of the utmoſt importance to mankind, it is that about the chief good. For to be wrong in this will lead a man wrong in his whole courſe; ſince his chief good muſt be his principal governing end. His Lordſhip is for leaving every man to judge of this for himſelf, and that no man has a right to judge for another. And ſince he makes happineſs to be what every man muſt purſue by the law and dictates of nature, and that the morality of actions, and the

* Vol. V. p. 206.

proper

proper ground of their obligation " conſiſts in LETTER
" this, that they are the means of acquiring X.
" happineſs agreeable to our nature *." If men fix a wrong happineſs to themſelves it will put them upon improper meaſures, and give a wrong direction to their moral conduct. And certain it is, that there is nothing in which men are more apt to be miſtaken, and to form wrong judgments, than this. This author makes a diſtinction between pleaſure and happineſs, and obſerves, that inſtinct and appetite leads to the former, and reaſon to the latter. But he owns, that moſt men are apt to confound theſe. And he himſelf defines happineſs to be a *continued permanent ſeries of agreeable ſenſations or pleaſures* †. And muſt every man be left to himſelf, without any farther direction, to judge of his duty and happineſs, from what he thinks will produce in him a ſeries of the moſt agreeable ſenſations and pleaſures; and that, abſtracting (for ſo our author would have it), from all conſideration of another life, and a future account? If the paſſions be brought into the conſultation, and they will be apt to force themſelves in, and claim being heard, the judgment that is formed is like to be very unequal and uncertain; eſpecially conſidering the influence they have, by his own account, in bringing over reaſon to pronounce on their ſide, or at leaſt to come to a kind of compoſition with them. It muſt needs therefore be a mighty advantage to

* Vol. IV. p. 283, 284. † Vol. V. p. 378.

have

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have this determined for us by a divine authority; and nothing could be more worthy of the divine wisdom and goodness, than to grant an extraordinary revelation for instructing men in what relates to the true happiness and perfection of their nature, and directing them in the way that leads to it.

5thly, Another thing which it highly concerneth men to be well informed of, relateth to the terms of their acceptance with God, and the means of reconciliation when they have offended him; and this is a very proper subject for a divine revelation. Dr. *Clarke* had urged this in his *Evidences of natural and revealed Religion* *. But his Lordship, who hath undertaken to answer him, thinks this to be of small consequence, and scarce worth enquiring about. He pronounces, that "neither reason nor expe-"rience will lead us to enquire, what propitia-"tion God will accept, nor in what manner a "reconciliation between the supreme Being, "and this worm man, is to be made †." Indeed upon his scheme it would be to little purpose to make such an enquiry, since he would have us believe that God doth not concern himself at all about the individuals of the human race, nor taketh any notice of their actions, so as to be pleased or displeased with them, or to reward or punish them on the account of those actions. I shall not repeat what hath been al-

* Clarke's Evidences of natural and revealed Religion, p. 293.
† Vol. V. p. 209.

ready

ready offered to ſhew that this ſcheme is contrary to reaſon, and if purſued to its genuine conſequences would be ſubverſive of all virtue and good order in the world. At preſent I ſhall only farther obſerve, that if men are reaſonable creatures, moral agents, and if God hath given them a law, as this writer ſometimes not only allows, but aſſerts, and which muſt be acknowleged, if the law of nature be God's law; then they muſt certainly be under indiſpenſable obligations to obey that law; nor can it conſiſtently be ſuppoſed, that the great Governor of the world is perfectly indifferent, whether his reaſonable creatures obey his law or not. A tranſgreſſion of that law, which is the will of God, muſt certainly have a monſtrous malignity in it, as it is an offence committed by his reaſonable creatures, and the ſubjects of his moral government, againſt the majeſty and authority, as well as goodneſs, of the ſupreme univerſal Lord and Sovereign of the univerſe. And how can ſuch creatures as we are pretend poſitively to pronounce what puniſhment ſin deſerves, or how far it may ſeem fit to God in his governing wiſdom and righteouſneſs to puniſh his offending creatures, or upon what terms he will pardon their tranſgreſſions, and reſtore them to his grace and favour, or how far that pardon is to extend? Theſe are things which manifeſtly depend upon what ſeemeth moſt fit to his infinite wiſdom, and concerning which we could not preſume to form a certain judg-

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ment, if he ſhould not declare his will concerning it.

As to what our author adds, that "repentance, as it implies amendment, is one of the "doctrines of natural religion; and he does "not ſo much as ſuſpect, that any farther reve-"lation is neceſſary to eſtabliſh it;" it will be eaſily owned, that repentance and amendment is neceſſary when we have ſinned againſt God; and that this is a doctrine of natural religion: But that this alone is ſufficient to avert the penalty we had incurred by diſobedience, natural reaſon cannot aſſure us. It is certain, that to eſtabliſh this rule in human governments would go a great way to diſſolve all order and government. And who can undertake to affirm, that in the divine government it muſt be an eſtabliſhed rule, that as often as ever ſinners repent, they muſt not only be freed from the puniſhment they had incurred, but be received to the divine favour, and their imperfect obedience rewarded, as if they had not offended, without any farther expedient to ſecure and vindicate the authority of his laws? It is evident, that in the natural courſe of things, as ordered by divine providence, repentance and amendment doth not avert many of thoſe evils which may be regarded as the puniſhments of men's crimes. They often labour under evils brought upon them by thoſe vices of which they have heartily repented, and feel the penal effects of their evil courſes, even after they have forſaken them.

And

And ſince by this conſtitution the Author of nature hath declared, that repentance alone ſhall not free men in all caſes from puniſhment, who can take upon him to determine, that our great offended ſovereign, the moſt wiſe and righteous Lord and Governor of the world, may not judge ſomething farther neceſſary to ſhew his diſpleaſure againſt ſin, and to vindicate the majeſty of his government, and the authority of his laws? And accordingly the natural ſenſe of mankind hath generally led them to be anxiouſly ſollicitous, when they were ſenſible of their having offended God, to uſe ſome means to avert the divine diſpleaſure. Their fears have given occaſion to much ſuperſtition, and many expedients have been deviſed, which have been generally of ſuch a kind, as to ſhew how improper judges men are of thoſe things, if left to themſelves. A divine revelation would undoubtedly give the beſt and ſureſt direction in matters of this nature, and the fulleſt ſatisfaction to the mind. It properly belongeth to God to determine upon what terms he will be propitiated to guilty creatures, how far his forgiveneſs ſhall extend, and what graces and favours he ſhall think fit to confer upon them. LETTER X.

The laſt thing I ſhall mention, as what ſhews the great need of divine revelation, relates to the rewards and puniſhments of a future ſtate. That this is a doctrine of vaſt importance to mankind, for engaging them to virtue, and reſtraining their vices, appears from this writer's

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own expreſs acknowlegements. Several paſſages were produced to this purpoſe in my eighth letter. At the ſame time he has endeavoured to ſhew, that we have no aſſurance of it by human reaſon, but that it rather leadeth us to believe the contrary. And yet he does not pretend abſolutely to affirm, that it is evident to reaſon there is no ſuch ſtate at all. Since therefore it is of great importance to mankind to believe a ſtate of future retributions, and yet we have not ſufficient aſſurance of it by human unaſſiſted reaſon, it muſt certainly be a proper ſubject of divine revelation. Some of the Deiſts indeed have in this caſe thought proper to take a different method. In order to avoid the argument brought from hence to ſhew the neceſſity or the advantage of an extraordinary revelation, they have pretended, that the doctrine of the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate, is ſo evident to the natural reaſon of mankind, and hath been ſo generally believed in all ages and nations, that there was no need of a revelation to aſſure men of it. But Lord *Bolingbroke* hath precluded himſelf from this way of arguing, ſince he hath taken pains to prove, that this doctrine is not founded in reaſon. And though he ſometimes declares it to have been urged and recommended by the wiſeſt men among the antients, he repreſents it as if it was what they regarded rather as an uſeful doctrine than a true one, and as if they did not really believe it themſelves, though they thought it neceſſary that

that the people ſhould believe it. He affirms, LETTER X.
that "the greateſt part of the philoſophers did "their utmoſt to eſtabliſh the belief of rewards "and puniſhments in a future life, that they "might allure to virtue, and deter from vice, "more effectually *." Yet afterwards he tells us, that "the moſt zealous aſſerters of a Su- "preme Being, and warmeſt defenders of his "providence, and they who were the moſt per- "ſuaded of the neceſſity of religion to pre- "ſerve government, either rejected the doctrine "of a future ſtate, or they admitted it by "halves, *i. e.* they did not admit future puniſh- "ments:" And that "this doctrine was never "firmly enough eſtabliſhed in the philoſophical, "whatever it was in the vulgar creed." Yet he aſſerts, that "it was not only problematical in "the opinions of Theiſtical philoſophers, but "it ſeems in ſeveral inſtances to have little hold "on vulgar opinion." As he endeavours to ſhew by a remarkable quotation from *Cicero, Orat. pro A. Cluentio*; which he ſeems well pleaſed with, and refers to more than once †.

The truth is, it would be equally wrong to affirm, that all the philoſophers believed it, and that none of them did ſo. It is wrong on the one hand to pretend, as Lord *Bolingbroke* has done, that there is no foundation for it in reaſon; or on the other, that it is ſo clear and demonſtrable from human reaſon, that there was no need of a divine revelation farther to confirm

* Vol. V. p. 222. † *Ib.* p. 354. 355. 487.

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and enforce it. The arguments for a future ſtate in general, eſpecially thoſe of a moral kind, are of great weight: But yet there are ſeveral things to be oppoſed to them, which diminiſh the evidence, and will miniſter ground of ſuſpicion and doubt, if conſidered merely on the foot of natural reaſon. And as to the nature, greatneſs, and duration, of thoſe future rewards and puniſhments, it is evident that unaſſiſted reaſon can give us no information concerning it which can be depended upon. We ſtand in great need therefore of an extraordinary revelation to aſſure us of that inviſible ſtate. This plainly follows from what his Lordſhip hath advanced. He repreſents "the rewards and puniſhments of a future ſtate as the great bands "that attach men to revealed religion:" And introduces his plain man as ſaying, that "it would "be for the intereſt of theſe, and ſeveral other "doctrines, to let them reſt on the authority of "revelation *." And he directly declares, that "this doctrine muſt ſtand on the bottom of re"velation, or on none. On this bottom it "would do ſome good moſt certainly, and it "could do no hurt †."

The ſeveral conſiderations which have been offered may ſuffice to ſhew the need the world ſtood in of an extraordinary revelation. And that therefore it may be reaſonably concluded from the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, that man-

* Vol. III. p. 557. —— See alſo Vol. V. p. 322, 353.
† *Ib.* p. 488.

kind

kind have not been univerſally, and at all times, left without the aſſiſtance of ſuch a revelation. It is particularly probable from the circumſtances of men in the firſt ages of the world, that they were not left altogether deſtitute of means that ſeemed ſo neceſſary to furniſh them with a right knowlege of God, and of their duty. This writer himſelf obſerves in a paſſage cited above, that "a conſequence of the ſurprize, inexperience, and ignorance, of the firſt men muſt have been much doubt and uncertainty concerning the firſt Cauſe." And that "to prove the unity of the firſt Cauſe required more obſervation, and deepeſt reflection, than the firſt men could make *." And after having obſerved, that "the precepts of the law of nature are general, and that reaſon muſt be employed to make proper and neceſſary deductions from thoſe precepts, and to apply them in every caſe that concerns our duty to God and man," he adds, that "human reaſon being at beſt fallible, and having been little informed by experience in the early ages, a multitude of falſe deductions, and wrong applications, could not fail to be made †." It is therefore highly probable from the goodneſs of God, and the neceſſities of mankind, that he would graciouſly interpoſe to make ſome diſcoveries of himſelf, and of his will, in the earlieſt ages, to the firſt parents and anceſtors of the human race, to be by them communicated

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* Vol. III. p. 259. † Vol. V. p. 154.

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to their offspring, for inſtructing them in the main important principles of all religion, and directing them in the principal articles of moral duty. And as this may be plainly gathered from the accounts given us in Scripture, ſo there are ſeveral facts in the hiſtory of mankind that almoſt neceſſarily lead us to ſuch a ſuppoſition. To this may principally be aſcribed the general belief of ſome of the main principles of religion, which obtained before men had made any conſiderable improvements in philoſophy, or the art of reaſoning; particularly relating to the creation of the world, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate, which were generally received even among the moſt illiterate and barbarous nations, and were probably derived from a tradition tranſmitted from the firſt ages, and originally owing to divine revelation. And accordingly it has been almoſt univerſally believed among mankind, that divine revelations have been communicated; which belief may be probably aſcribed to traditional accounts of ſuch revelations, as well as to the natural ſenſe men have generally had of their need of ſuch aſſiſtances. There has been no ſuch thing as mere natural religion, abſtracting from all divine revelation, profeſſed in any age, or in any nation of the world. Lord *Bolingbroke* in his inquiries this way is forced to have recourſe to *China*, and to the fabulous ages of their hiſtory, anſwering pretty much to the golden age of the poets, when he ſuppoſes they were governed by mere natural

natural religion *. But of this he produceth no proofs. And if the ages there referred to relate, as they probably do, to the early patriarchal times, the original revelation might have been preſerved in ſome degree of purity, though in proceſs of time it became greatly corrupted there, as well as in other nations. LETTER X.

It adds a great weight to all that has been obſerved, that the greateſt men of antiquity ſeem to have been ſenſible, that bare reaſon alone was not ſufficient to enforce doctrines and laws with a proper force upon mankind without a divine authority and revelation. Our author obſerves, that "the moſt celebrated philoſophers and lawgivers did enforce their doctrines and laws by a divine authority, and call in an higher principle to the aſſiſtance of philoſophy and bare reaſon." He inſtances in "*Zoroaſter*, *Hoſtanes*, the *Magi*, *Minos*, *Pythagoras*, *Numa*, &c. and all thoſe who founded or formed religions and commonwealths; who made theſe pretenſions, and paſſed for perſons divinely inſpired and commiſſioned †." This ſhews that they built upon a principle deeply laid in the human nature, concerning the need we ſtand in of a divine authority and revelation, and which was probably ſtrengthened by ſome remains of antient traditions relating to ſuch revelations. But as thoſe philoſophers and lawgivers he ſpeaks of produced no proper and authentic credentials, it could not be expected to

* Vol. V. p. 228, 229. † *Ib.* p. 227.

have

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have a very lasting and extensive effect; and yet the very pretences to it gave their laws and institutions a force, which otherwise they would not have had. But as the several sects of philosophers in subsequent ages among the *Greeks* and *Romans* only stood on the foot of their own reasonings, and could not pretend to a divine authority, this very much hindered the effect of their instructions. And indeed the best and wisest among them confessed their sense of the want of a divine revelation, and hoped for something of that nature. This is what Dr. *Clarke* has shewn by express testimonies: Nor does Lord *Bolingbroke* deny it. He says, "it "must be admitted, that *Plato* insinuates in "many places the want, or the necessity of a "divine revelation, to discover the external ser-"vice God requires, and the expiation for sin, "and to give stronger assurances of the rewards "and punishments that await men in another "world *." But he thinks it absurd and trifling to bring the opinion of *Socrates*, *Plato*, and other philosophers, concerning their want of di-"vine revelation, and their hopes that it would "be supplied, as a proof that the want was real, "and that after it had been long complained "of, it was supplied †." He attempts to shew that their want was not real, as if he knew better what they wanted than they themselves did, and were a more proper judge of the true state of their case than they were. He repeats what

* Vol. V. p. 214, 215. † *Ib.* p. 216.

he

he had ſaid before, that there is no moral pre- LETTER
cept taught in the Goſpel, which they did not X.
teach: And that "the phenomena that diſco-
"vered to them the exiſtence of God, diſcovered
"the divine will in all the extent of moral obli-
"gation*." As if it were equally eaſy to diſ-
cover the *whole extent of moral obligation*, as
to diſcover the exiſtence of the Deity. He adds,
that "they could not know a revealed religion,
"nor any real want of it, before the revelation
"was made." That they could not be ac-
quainted with the revelation before it was given,
will be readily granted; but it doth not follow,
that they could not be ſenſible of their want of
it. He pronounces however, that "their com-
"plaints, and their expectations were founded
"in proud curioſity, and vain preſumption." It
was proud, it ſeems, to be ſenſible of their igno-
rance, and need of farther inſtruction; it was pre-
ſumption to hope or to deſire any farther illumi-
nation in things concerning which they were in
doubt, and which it was of great importance to
them to know. He adds, that "the knowlege
"they had was ſuch as the Author of nature had
"thought ſufficient, ſince he had given them
"no more," And concludes, that "for Dr.
"*Clarke* to deduce from the ſuppoſed reaſon-
"ableneſs of their complaints, the neceſſity of
"a farther revelation, is to weigh his own opi-
"nion and theirs againſt providence†." But
allowing the neceſſity of revelation, there is

* Vol. V. p. 217. † *Ib.* p. 220.

no

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really the caſe, that God was graciouſly pleaſed, LETTER
at that time, and in that manner which ſeemed X.
fitteſt to his infinite wiſdom, to communicate a clearer and fuller diſcovery and revelation of his will, than had been ever yet given to mankind for recovering them from the ignorance, idolatry, and corruption, into which they were generally fallen; this certainly ought to be acknowleged with great thankfulneſs, as a moſt ſignal inſtance of the divine goodneſs and love to mankind, and concern for human happineſs.

There is one paſſage more which may deſerve ſome notice. Having obſerved, that Biſhop *Wilkins* ſeems to place the chief diſtinction of human nature not in reaſon in general, but in religion, the apprehenſion of a Deity, and the expectation of a future ſtate, which no creature below man doth partake of; he remarks upon it, that "they who ſuppoſe all men incapable to "attain a full knowlege of natural religion and "theology without revelation, take from us the "very eſſence and form of man according to "the Biſhop, and deny that any of us have "that degree of reaſon which is neceſſary to "diſtinguiſh our ſpecies, and ſufficient to lead "us to the unity of the firſt intelligent Cauſe "of all things *." But the Biſhop by repreſenting man to be a religious creature, only intended to ſignify, that he is naturally capable of knowing, and being inſtructed in it, which the

* Vol. IV. p. 71.

brutes

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brutes are not: But it is not to be underſtood, as if all men had naturally an actual knowlege of religion, which is contrary to fact and experience; or as if all men were capable of attaining to a full knowlege of it merely by the force of their own reaſon, without any inſtruction or aſſiſtance at all. Man's being formed a religious creature does not hinder the uſe and neceſſity of inſtruction. It is ſtill ſuppoſed, that all proper helps and aſſiſtances are to be taken in. And notwithſtanding his natural capacities, he would never attain to ſuch a knowlege of religion without the aſſiſtance of divine revelation, as he may attain to by that aſſiſtance. Theſe things are perfectly conſiſtent: Man's being in his original deſign a religious creature, and his ſtanding in need of divine revelation to inſtruct him in religion, and give him a fuller knowlege of it. Revelation ſuppoſes him a creature capable of religion, and applies to him as ſuch.

It may not be improper to obſerve here, that this writer, who leaves no method unattempted, which he thinks may anſwer his deſign, ſeems ſometimes to cry up the great efficacy of a true divine revelation, and the mighty effects it muſt have produced, if it had actually been made, with a view to ſhew that never was there any revelation really given to mankind. He ſays, that "unexceptionable revelations, real miracles, and certain traditions, could never prove

" prove ineffectual *:" That if the revelations LETTER X.
" that have been pretended, had not been pre-
" tended only, if the ſame divine wiſdom that
" ſhews both the exiſtence and will of God in
" his works, had preſcribed any particular form
" of worſhip to mankind, and had inſpired the
" particular application of his general laws, the
" neceſſary conſequence would have been, that
" the ſyſtem of religion and government would
" have been uniform through the whole world,
" as well as conformable to nature and reaſon,
" and the ſtate of mankind would have arrived
" at human perfection †." He proceeds ſo far as to declare, that in a ſupernatural diſpenſation, the *divine omnipotence* ſhould have *impoſed it on all mankind*, ſo as neceſſarily to *engage their aſſent* ‡. And that it *muſt have forced conviction*, and *taken away even the poſſibility of doubt* ‖. Can any thing be more unreaſonable? As if revelation could be of no uſe at all, except by an irreſiſtible force it overpowered all men's underſtandings and wills. But ſurely, if God gives men clear diſcoveries of his will and their duty, this muſt be acknowleged to be a glorious inſtance of his wiſdom and goodneſs, though he does not abſolutely conſtrain them to aſſent, which would be to take away their free-agency, and to deſtroy the œconomy of his providence. May we not here apply in the caſe of revelation what he himſelf ſaith with regard

* Vol. IV. p. 224. † Vol. V. p. 201. ‡ Vol. IV. 267.
‖ *Ib.* p. 261.

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to reaſon? It may be truly ſaid, that God when he gave us reaſon left us to our free-will, to make a proper or improper uſe of it; ſo that we are "obliged to our Creator, for a certain rule, and "ſufficient means of arriving at happineſs, and "have none to blame but ourſelves when we "fail of it. It is not reaſon, but perverſe will, "that makes men fall ſhort of attainable happineſs.——And we are ſelf-condemned when "we deviate from the rule *." This holds ſtrongly with regard to revelation. God hath been graciouſly pleaſed to reveal doctrines and laws to mankind, of great uſe and advantage for inſtructing them in the knowlege of religion, and directing them in the way to happineſs. But when he has done this, and confirmed that revelation with ſufficient credentials, ſtill he thinks fit, as the wiſe moral Governor, to leave them to their free-will, and the exerciſe of their own moral powers; and thus deals with them as reaſonable creatures, and moral agents. If they do not receive, and make a right uſe of this advantage, the divine wiſdom and goodneſs is not to be blamed, but their own obſtinacy and perverſeneſs.

But though a revelation, if really given, cannot be ſuppoſed to come with ſuch force as irreſiſtably to conſtrain men's aſſent, and though it fail of producing all thoſe effects, which might be juſtly expected, and which it is naturally fitted to produce, yet it may be of very

* Vol. V. p. 288.

great

great uſe and benefit to mankind. This writer LETTER X.
repreſents the general reformation of men as an impoſſible thing: He obſerves, that neither human nor divine laws have been able to reform the manners of men effectually. Yet he owns, that "this is ſo far from making natural "or revealed religion, or any means that tend "to the reformation of mankind, unneceſſary, "that it makes them all more neceſſary. —— "And that nothing ſhould be neglected that "tends to enforce moral obligation, and all "the doctrines of natural religion. And that "nothing may ſeem in ſpeculation ſo proper "to this purpoſe, as a true revelation, or a "revelation believed to be true *." And he afterwards ſays, that "if the conflict between "virtue and vice in the great commonwealth "of mankind was not maintained by religious "and civil inſtitutions, the human ſtate would "be intolerable †." Thoſe therefore muſt be very ill employed, and can in no ſenſe be regarded as the friends and benefactors of mankind, who take pains to deſtroy theſe inſtitutions, to ſubvert the main principles of natural and revealed religion, and thereby to deſtroy all the influence it might have on the minds of men. If the reformation of mankind be ſo difficult, notwithſtanding all the powers of reaſon, and all the force of the additional light, and powerful motives, which revelation furniſhes, what could be expected, if all theſe were

* Vol. V. p. 267, 268. † *Ib.* p. 227.

LETTER X. laid aſide, and men were taught to have no regard to them at all?

I ſhall conclude with obſerving, that Lord *Bolingbroke*'s ſcheme, contrary to his own intention, ſeems to furniſh arguments to prove the great uſefulneſs and neceſſity of divine revelation. He has endeavoured to ſhew, that we can have no certainty, if we judge by the phenomena, concerning the moral attributes of God, his juſtice and goodneſs: That no argument can be brought from reaſon in proof of a particular providence, though he does not pretend to ſay it is impoſſible: That the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate, though uſeful to be believed, are things which we have no ground from reaſon to believe, and which reaſon will neither affirm nor deny: That the laws of nature are general, and the particulars of moral duty derived from them, are very uncertain, and in which men have been always very apt to miſtake, and make wrong concluſions. Now if it be of high importance, as it manifeſtly is, that men ſhould be aſſured of the moral attributes of God; that they ſhould believe a particular providence, extending to the individuals of the human race, and exerciſing an inſpection over them, and their actions and affairs; that they ſhould believe the immortality of the ſoul, and a ſtate of future rewards and puniſhments; and that they ſhould be rightly inſtructed in the particulars of moral duty; if all theſe be of unqueſtionable importance

portance to be believed and known by mankind (and yet we can, according to him, have no assurance of them by mere natural reason), then there is great need of an extraordinary divine revelation to give us a proper certainty in these matters, and a well-attested revelation assuring us of these things, and furnishing us with proper instructions concerning them, ought to be received with the highest thankfulness. LETTER V.

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Lord Bolingbroke's *ſtrange repreſentation of the* Jewiſh *revelation. His attempts againſt the truth of the* Moſaic *hiſtory. The antiquity, impartiality, and great uſefulneſs of that hiſtory ſhewn. The pretence that* Moſes *was not a contemporary author, and that his hiſtory is not confirmed by collateral teſtimony, and that there is no proof that the* Pentateuch *was written by* Moſes, *examined. The* Moſaic *hiſtory and laws not forged in the time of the judges, nor in that of the kings, nor after the* Babyloniſh *captivity. The charge of inconſiſtencies in the* Moſaic *accounts conſider'd. The grand objection againſt the* Moſaic *hiſtory drawn from the incredible nature of the facts themſelves examined at large. The reaſon and propriety of erecting the* Moſaic *policy. No abſurdity in ſuppoſing God to have ſelected the* Jews *as a peculiar people. The great and amazing difference between them and the heathen nations as to the acknowlegement and adoration of the one true God, and him only. The good effects of the* Jewiſh *conſtitution, and the valuable ends which were anſwered by it. It is no juſt objection againſt the truth of the Scriptures that they come to us through the hands of the* Jews.

SIR,

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SIR,

HAVING conſidered what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered with regard to divine revelation in general, I now proceed to examine the objections he hath advanced againſt the *Jewiſh* and Chriſtian revelation. Of the latter he ſometimes ſpeaks with ſeeming reſpect and decency: But with regard to the former, he ſets no bounds to invective and abuſe. He here allows himſelf without reſerve in all the licentiouſneſs of reproach. Far from admitting it to be a true divine revelation, he every-where repreſents it as the very worſt conſtitution, that ever pretended to a divine original, and as even worſe than Atheiſm.

Beſides occaſional paſſages every-where interſperſed in his writings, there are ſome parts of his works, where he ſets himſelf purpoſely and at large to expoſe the *Moſaic* revelation. This is the principal deſign of the long letter in the third volume of his works, occaſioned by one of Archbiſhop *Tillotſon*'s ſermons: As alſo of the ſecond ſection of his third Eſſay in the fourth volume, which is *on the riſe and progreſs of Monotheiſm:* And of the fifteenth, twentieth, twenty-firſt, ſeventy-third, ſeventy-fifth of his Fragments and Eſſays in the fifth volume.

In conſidering Lord *Bolingbroke*'s objections againſt the holy Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, and eſpecially againſt the books of *Moſes*, I ſhall diſtinctly examine what he hath offered againſt

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the truth of the Scripture hiſtory, and againſt the divine authority of the ſacred writings. This is the method he himſelf hath pointed out in the above-mentioned letter occaſioned by one of Archbiſhop *Tillotſon*'s ſermons.

I ſhall begin with conſidering his objections againſt the truth of the hiſtory. But firſt it will not be improper to make ſome general obſervations upon the Scripture hiſtory, and eſpecially that which is contained in the *Moſaic* writings.

And firſt, it deſerves our veneration and regard on the account of its great antiquity. We have no accounts that can in any degree be depended upon, or that have any pretence to be received as authentic records, prior to the *Moſaic* hiſtory, or indeed till ſome ages after it was written. But though it relateth to the moſt antient times, it is obſervable that it doth not run up the hiſtory to a fabulous and incredible antiquity, as the *Egyptians*, *Chaldeans*, and ſome other nations did. *Moſes*'s account of the time of the creation of the world, the general deluge, *&c.* reduces the age of the world within the rules of a moderate computation, perfectly conſiſtent with the beſt accounts we have of the origin of nations, the founding of cities and empires, the novelty of arts and ſciences, and of the moſt uſeful inventions of human life: All which lead us to aſſign an age to the world which comports very well with the *Moſaic* hiſtory, but is no way compatible with the extravagant antiquities of other eaſtern nations.

Another

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5. Another thing which ſhould greatly recommend the Scripture hiſtory to our eſteem is the remarkable ſimplicity and impartiality of it. It contains a plain narration of facts, delivered in a ſimple unaffected ſtyle, without art or ornament. And never was there any hiſtory that diſcovered a more equal and unbiaſs'd regard to truth. Several things are there recorded, which, if the hiſtorian had not laid it down as a rule to himſelf, not only not to contradict the truth but not to conceal or diſguiſe it, would not have been mentioned. Of this kind is what our author refers to concerning *Jacob's* obtaining the birth-right and bleſſing by a fraud *. For though it is plain from the prophecy that was given forth before the birth of the children, that the bleſſing was originally deſigned for *Jacob* the younger in preference to *Eſau* the elder, yet the method *Jacob* took, by the advice of his mother *Rebekka*, to engage his father *Iſaac* to pronounce the bleſſing upon him, had an appearance of art and circumvention, which, conſidering the known jealouſy and antipathy between the *Edomites* and the people of *Iſrael*, and the occaſion it might give to the former to inſult and reproach the latter, it might be expected an *Iſraelitiſh* hiſtorian would have endeavoured to conceal. To the ſame impartial regard to truth it is owing, that *Reuben's* inceſt, and that of *Judah* with his daughter-in-law *Tamar*, from which deſcended the principal fa-

* Vol. III. p. 304.

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milies of the noble tribe of *Judah*, are recorded? As is alſo the cruel and perfidious act of *Simeon* and *Levi*, the latter *Moſes's* own anceſtor, and the curſe pronounced upon them by *Jacob* on the account of it. This writer indeed, who ſeems determined at all hazards, and upon every ſuppoſition to find fault with the ſacred hiſtorians, has endeavoured to turn even their impartiality to their diſadvantage. Having mention'd *common ſenſe* and *common honeſty*, he ſays, that "the *Jews*, or the penmen of their traditions, "had ſo little of either, that they repreſent "ſometimes a patriarch like *Jacob*, and ſome-"times a ſaint like *David*, by characters that "belong to none but the worſt of men *." This according to our author's manner is highly exaggerated. But I think nothing can be a ſtronger proof of the moſt unreaſonable prejudice, than to produce that as an inſtance of the want of *common ſenſe* and *common honeſty* in thoſe writers, which in any other writers in the world would be regarded as the higheſt proof of their honeſty, their candour and impartiality; *viz.* their not taking pains to diguiſe or conceal the faults of the moſt eminent of their anceſtors; eſpecially when it appears, that this is not done from a principle of malignity, or to detract from their merits, ſince their good actions, and the worthy parts of their character are alſo impartially repreſented, but merely from a regard to truth, and from an unaffected ſimplicity, which every-where

* Vol. V. p. 194.

appears

appears in their writings in a manner ſcarce to be paralleled in any other hiſtorians, and which derives a mighty credit to all their narrations. But what above all ſhews the impartiality of *Moſes*, and of the other ſacred hiſtorians of the Old Teſtament, is their relating without diſguiſe, not only the faults of their great men, but the frequent revolts and infidelities of the *Iſraelites*, and the puniſhments which befel them on that account. Lord *Bolingbroke* has indeed diſcovered, what no man but himſelf would have been apt to ſuſpect, that even this was intended to flatter their pride and vanity; "becauſe though "they are repreſented as rebellious children, "yet ſtill as favourite children—Notwithſtanding all their revolts, God's predilection for "this choſen people ſtill ſubſiſts.—And he renews his promiſes to them of future glory and "triumph,—a *Meſſiah*—a kingdom that ſhould "deſtroy all others, and laſt eternally *."—As to the kingdom of the *Meſſiah*, which he here refers to as promiſed to the *Jews*, it was to be of a ſpiritual nature, and was not to be confined to the people of *Iſrael* alone, but to be of general benefit to mankind. And even the rejecting of that *Meſſiah* by the body of their nation, and the puniſhments and deſolations to which this ſhould expoſe them, were foretold. And it was certainly a moſt extraordinary expedient to flatter the vanity of a people, to repreſent them as having carried it moſt ungrate-

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* Vol. III. p. 284.

fully

LETTER XL. fully towards God for all his benefits, and tho' not abſolutely and finally rejected, yet as having frequently drawn upon themſelves the moſt ſignal effects of the divine diſpleaſure. If the view of the ſacred hiſtorians had been to flatter the pride and preſumption of that people, ſurely they might have repreſented them as the objects of the divine favour, without giving ſuch an account of their conduct; from which their enemies have taken occaſion bitterly to reproach them, as the moſt ungrateful and obſtinate race of men that ever appeared upon earth. Nothing could have induced them to record facts which ſeemed to give ſuch a diſadvantageous idea of their nation, but an honeſt and impartial regard to truth, rarely to be found in other hiſtorians.

But that which eſpecially diſtinguiſheth *Moſes*, and the other ſacred hiſtorians, is the ſpirit of unaffected piety that every-where breathes in their writings. We may obſerve throughout a profound veneration for the Deity, a zeal for the glory of His great name, a deſire of promoting His true fear and worſhip, and the practice of righteouſneſs, and to engage men to a dutiful obedience to His holy and excellent laws. Their hiſtory was not written merely for political ends and views, or to gratify curioſity, but for nobler purpoſes. The *Moſaical* hiſtory opens with an account of the creation of the world, which by the author's own acknowlegement is an article of the higheſt moment in religion. It gives an account of the formation of man, of his primitive ſtate, and his fall from that ſtate, of the univerſal deluge,

the moſt remarkable event that ever happened to mankind, of the lives of ſome of the patriarchs, and of many moſt ſignal acts of providence, upon which depended the erection and eſtabliſhment of a ſacred polity, the proper deſign of which was to ingage men to the adoration of the one living and true God, the maker and governor of the world, and of him only, in oppoſition to all idolatry and polytheiſm. The recording theſe things was not only of immediate uſe to the people among whom they were firſt publiſhed, but hath had a great effect in all ages ever ſince, to promote a reverence of the Supreme Being among thoſe who have received theſe ſacred writings; and it tended alſo to prepare the way for the laſt and moſt perfect revelation of the divine will that was ever given to mankind. Nothing therefore can be more unjuſt than the cenſure he hath been pleaſed to paſs on a great part of the *Moſaic* hiſtory, that it is *fit only to amuſe children with**.

Let us now conſider the objections he hath advanced againſt this hiſtory.

And firſt, he urges that *Moſes* was not a contemporary author. This is not true with reſpect to a conſiderable part of the hiſtory recorded in the *Pentateuch*. Many of the things which are moſt objected againſt, eſpecially the extraordinary facts done in *Egypt*, at the *Red Sea*, at the promulgation of the law at *Sinai*, and during the ſojourning of the *Iſraelites* in the wilderneſs,

* Vol. III. p. 304.

were

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were things to which *Moſes* was not only contemporary, but of which he was himſelf an eye-witneſs. As to that part of the hiſtory which is contained in the book of *Geneſis*, and which relateth to events which happened before the time of *Moſes*, it cannot be juſtly objected againſt on that account; except it be laid down as a rule, that no hiſtory is to be believed, which was written by an author who was not contemporary to all the facts which he relates. But this has never yet been allowed as a maxim in judging of the credit of an hiſtory; and if admitted would diſcard ſome of the beſt hiſtories now in the world. Nor does our author himſelf pretend to inſiſt upon it as a general rule: But he wants to know "where *Moſes* got his "materials, when he writ the book of *Geneſis*." A moſt unreaſonable demand at this diſtance of time. As to the far greater part of that book, which relates to the lives of the patriarchs, *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, *Jacob*, *Joſeph*, and to the firſt ſettlement of the *Iſraelites* in *Egypt*, theſe are evidently things of which he may be ſuppoſed to have had full information. And with regard to the events which happened before the time of *Abraham*, the accounts given of them by *Moſes* are generally very ſhort; conſiſting for the moſt part of little more than the genealogies of perſons and families, interſperſed with a few brief anecdotes, the memory of which was eaſily preſerved. The moſt remarkable event during that period, and of which *Moſes* gives the

the moſt particular account, was the univerſal deluge. And this muſt have been then very well known. His not giving into the extravagant antiquities of ſome of the eaſtern nations; and his not attempting to fill up that period with ſuch fabulous romantic accounts as have been invented ſince his time, among Jews, Chriſtians, and Mahometans, is a ſtrong preſumption in his favour; and the plainneſs, ſimplicity, and impartial love of truth, which, as hath been already obſerved, appears in his hiſtory, makes it reaſonable to believe, that he had the accounts he gives from memorials which he knew might be depended upon. What ways they had of tranſmitting the memory of things in thoſe antient times we cannot at this diſtance diſtinctly explain, but that they had ſeveral ways of doing this we may be well aſſured. And it has been often obſerved by learned men, through how few ſtages the tradition might run from *Adam* to *Abraham*, and from him to *Moſes*, conſidering the long lives of the firſt men *. The only thing mentioned by this writer as what *Moſes* could not have received by hiſtory or tradition, is the circumſtantial account given by him of the creation of the world: With regard to which he obſerves, that "*Adam* himſelf could "only have related to him ſome of the cir- LETTER XI.

* Mr. Hume makes the great length of men's lives, as recorded in the Moſaic hiſtory, to be an objection againſt it. Eſſay on Miracles, p. 206. But Lord Bolingbroke allows, that the lives of men in the firſt ages of the world were probably much longer than ours. Vol. III. p. 244.

"cum-

LETTER XI. "cumſtances of the ſixth day, but nothing that "preceded this." It will be eaſily allowed, that the account of this muſt have been originally owing to extraordinary revelation. And very worthy it was of the divine wiſdom to grant ſuch a revelation to the firſt parents and anceſtors of the human race, ſince it was a matter of great importance to mankind to be well acquainted with it; and our author himſelf owns, that "it "leads men to acknowlege a Supreme Being "by a proof levelled to the meaneſt under-"ſtanding *." And it may be juſtly concluded, that the account of this was tranſmitted with great care from our firſt parents, to their deſcendants, and preſerved among the moſt religious of them: Which might the better be done, if, as is very probable, the obſervation of the ſeventh day was appointed from the beginning to preſerve the memorial of it. So that the preſervation of this very important tradition may be accounted for even abſtracting from *Moſes's* divine inſpiration, which, if in any thing tradition had become imperfect, might eaſily enable him to ſupply the defects of it.

Another objection, on which his Lordſhip ſeems to lay a great ſtreſs, for invalidating the authority of the *Moſaic* hiſtory, is, that the principal facts are not confirmed by collateral teſtimony: And by collateral teſtimony he underſtands the teſtimony of thoſe who had no common intereſt of country, religion or profeſſion †.

* Vol. III. p. 253. † *Ib.* p. 281, 282.

But

But ſuch collateral teſtimony as this is no way ne- LETTER XI.
ceſſary to the authenticity of hiſtory. Many hiſtories are very reaſonably believed, which have no ſuch collateral teſtimony to confirm them. Such teſtimony is frequently not to be had; nor could reaſonably be expected with relation to many of the facts recorded by *Moſes*. As to that part of the *Moſaic* hiſtory, which relateth to the times of greateſt antiquity, little help can be expected from collateral teſtimony, ſince there is no hiſtory of thoſe times now extant ſo antient as his own. And yet there are conſiderable traces of tradition which have been preſerved among other nations, concerning ſome of the moſt remarkable events during that period, as hath been often ſhewn by learned men; eſpecially with relation to that which is the moſt extraordinary of them all, the univerſal deluge. Nor can any thing be more falſe and contrary to known fact, than what this writer boldly affirms, that "the tradition of *Noah's* deluge "is vouched by no other authority than that of "*Moſes*; and that the memory of that cata"ſtrophe was known only to one people, and "preſerved in one corner of the earth *." Nor only has there been a general tradition in confirmation of it †; but there are many proofs of it all over the earth, many phenomena which plainly lead us to acknowlege that there has been

* Vol. III. p. 224. † See concerning this Grotius de verit. relig. Chriſt. lib. I.

ſuch

LETTER XI. such a deluge, and which cannot otherwiſe be reaſonably accounted for.

With reſpect to that part of the hiſtory which relateth to the laws given to the *Iſraelites*, and the extraordinary facts whereby the authority of thoſe laws was eſtabliſhed; they were not only things of which *Moſes* had certain knowlege, and in which he could not be miſtaken, but they were of a moſt public nature, and to which the whole nation were witneſſes. The facts were of ſuch a kind that the accounts of them could not poſſibly have been impoſed by *Moſes* at that time upon the people, if they had not been true, nor could they have been made to believe that they were done before their eyes, if they had not been done. And theſe facts having been all along from that time received by that people together with the laws in confirmation of which they were wrought, furniſheth a proof of authenticity to this part of the *Moſaic* hiſtory, which can ſcarce be paralleled in any other.

I do not ſee how the force of this can be avoided, ſuppoſing *Moſes* to have been the author of the *Pentateuch*. But this is what Lord *Bolingbroke* thinks cannot be proved. He has made a kind of repreſentation after his own way of what Mr. *Abbadie* has offered to this purpoſe; and adds, that it would be hard to find an example of greater trifling ‡. But whoſoever will take pains to examine the argument, not as he is pleaſed to repreſent it, but as it ſtands in

‡ Vol. III. p. 275, 276.

Mr.

Mr. *Abbadie's* own book, will find how little he has offered that can in any degree take off the force of his reaſoning. Indeed it is hard to know what greater proof can reaſonably be deſired of *Moſes's* being the author of the *Pentateuch* than is given. The whole nation, among whom thoſe books have been always received with great veneration, as containing the moſt authentic accounts of their hiſtory and their laws, have conſtantly attributed them to *Moſes*. All thoſe of foreign nations, that have mentioned their hiſtory or their laws, have always ſuppoſed *Moſes* to have been the author of them. Never has it been denied till theſe latter ages, after ſo long a poſſeſſion, upon ſome cavils and exceptions which are really trifling, and which have been ſufficiently anſwered. And if all this will not be allowed to be a proof, it is impoſſible that any thing of this nature ſhould ever be proved. It hath all the proof which the nature of the thing can admit of, and it would be unreaſonable, by Lord *Bolingbroke's* own acknowlegement, to demand more. "Common ſenſe, "ſaith he, requires, that every thing propoſed "to the underſtanding, ſhould be accompanied "with ſuch proof, as the nature of it can furniſh. He who requires more is guilty of abſurdity; he who requires leſs of raſhneſs†."

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There is then all the evidence, which can be deſired in ſuch a caſe, that the books containing the original hiſtory and laws given to the people

† Vol. III. p. 246.

LETTER XL of *Iſrael*, were written by *Moſes*, as the whole nation to whom the hiſtory belonged, and who were governed by thoſe laws, and received them as the rule of their polity, have conſtantly affirmed. And of this they muſt be allowed to be competent witneſſes. His Lordſhip indeed, with a view to ſhew how little the teſtimony of the *Jews* is to be depended upon, and how eaſily thoſe laws might be impoſed upon them, mentions "the little time that it took to eſtabliſh "the divine authority of the *Alcoran* among the "*Arabs*, a people not more incapable to judge "of *Mahomet* and his book, than we may ſuppoſe the *Iſraelites* to have been to judge of "*Moſes* and his book, if he left any, whether "of law alone, or of hiſtory and law both §." But this obſervation is little to the purpoſe. The *Arabians* were ſufficient vouchers, that the *Alcoran* was the book left them by *Mahomet*, containing the revelations he pretended to have received from heaven. In this they are to be credited. So are the *Jews*, that the books containing the original hiſtory and laws of their nation were written by *Moſes*. As to the divine authority of thoſe laws, this muſt be tried by other arguments. But however ſtupid we may ſuppoſe the *Arabians* to have been, it would not have been in the power of *Mahomet* to have made them believe, that they themſelves had heard his laws diſtinctly delivered with the moſt amazing ſolemnity from heaven in the preſence

§ Vol. III. p. 278.

of

of above six hundred thousand men, if there had been no such thing: Or that he wrought a series of stupendous miracles before their eyes, if he had not done so. And accordingly he was too wise to put the proof of his own divine mission, or of the authority of his laws upon facts of such a nature: Which would have been the most effectual way he could have taken to detect and expose his own imposture. But he pretended to have received communications and revelations from heaven, the truth of which depended upon his own credit. The same observation may be made concerning those celebrated lawgivers of antiquity; who pretended to have received their laws from the Gods, as *Minos*, *Numa*, and others. None of them ever put the proof of the divine authority of their laws upon public facts of the most miraculous and extraordinary nature, done in the presence of all the people, and for the truth of which they appealed to them. They pretended to directions from oracles, or to secret communications with the Deity, of which the people had no proof, and which they received solely upon their authority. But *Moses* put the proof of the divine authority of his laws upon sensible facts of the most public nature, and of which the whole body of the people, to whom these laws were given, were witnesses. Appeals were made to the people, at the time when these laws were delivered, concerning those facts as done in their sight, and which they themselves could not possibly deny. The accounts of those

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facts, as I have elſewhere ſhewn ‖, are ſo interwoven with the laws, that they cannot be ſeparated. Some of the principal motives to engage the people to an obſervance of thoſe laws are founded on thoſe facts. Many of the laws were peculiarly deſigned to preſerve the remembrance of the facts, and cannot be otherwiſe accounted for than by ſuppoſing the truth of thoſe facts to which they relate. And this was the profeſſed deſign of the inſtitution of ſeveral of their ſacred rites, which were appointed to be ſolemnly obſerved by the whole nation in every age from the beginning of their polity, *i. e.* from the time when they firſt received theſe laws, and their conſtitution was eſtabliſhed. There were ſeveral public monuments which ſubſiſted ſeveral ages, to perpetuate the memory of the moſt remarkable of thoſe facts. The people were commanded, as by divine authority, frequently to conſider thoſe facts, and to take care to tranſmit them to their children. To which it may be added, that in all the remaining writings publiſhed at different times, and in different ages, among that nation, whether of an hiſtorical, moral, or devotional kind, there is a conſtant reference to thoſe facts as of undoubted credit and authority. They are repeated on ſo many different occaſions, ſo often and ſolemnly appealed to, that it appeareth with the utmoſt evidence which the thing is capable of, that theſe facts have been all along univerſally known and

‖ See View of the Deiſtical Writers, Vol. I.

acknow-

acknowleged, and the remembrance of them constantly kept up among that people. And upon the truth and authority of these facts, their peculiar constitution, whereby they were so remarkably distinguished from all other nations, was plainly founded; nor can it well be conceived, how it could have been established among them without those facts. It strengthens all this, when it is considered, that scarce ever was there any people, so well fitted by their constitution for preserving and transmitting the remembrance of their laws and facts, as the people of *Israel*. Their weekly sabbath, the observation of which was bound upon them in the strictest manner, and which was a constant memorial to them of their religion and law: Their sabbatical years, an institution of the most extraordinary nature, and which furnished a visible proof of the divine original and authority of that law, and in which it was ordered to be publickly read to the whole nation assembled together at their solemn festivals: The exact care that was taken to keep up the distinction of tribes, and the genealogies of the several families in their tribes, on which their legal right to their inheritances and possessions depended, and which they could trace to the time when the first division of the land was made, and their constitution established, with which the laws and facts were intimately connected: All these things laid them under peculiar obligations, and gave them peculiar advantages for preserving the remembrance of

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their law, and the facts done in atteſtation to it. Taking theſe conſiderations together, the evidence for the laws and facts is as ſtrong as can reaſonably be deſired for any facts done in paſt ages. And I am perſuaded the evidence would never have been conteſted, if it had not been for the pretended incredibility of the facts themſelves. But before I come to conſider this, I ſhall take notice of ſome other exceptions made by Lord *Bolingbroke* to the credit of this hiſtory.

He mentions it as a ſuſpicious circumſtance, that "the prieſts in *Egypt* and *Judea* were intruſted with the public records," and that this ſhews how little they are to be depended upon §. And he asks, "With what face can we ſuſpect "the authenticity of the *Egyptian* accounts "by *Manetho* and others, which were compiled "and preſerved by *Egyptian* prieſts, when we "receive the Old Teſtament on the faith of "*Jewiſh* ſcribes, a moſt ignorant and lying "race ‖?" But it is a great miſtake, or groſs miſrepreſentation to pretend that the *Jewiſh* hiſtory and ſacred writings, particularly thoſe of *Moſes*, were in the hands of the prieſts, or *Jewiſh* ſcribes alone. If like the *Egyptian* laws and records, they had been wrapt up in ſacred characters and hieroglyphics which the prieſts only underſtood, and of which they alone were the authoriſed guardians and interpreters, and which were carefully diſguiſed and concealed

§ Vol. III. p. 225, 226. ‖ *Ib.* p. 205.

from

from the people, there might be ſome ground for this pretence. But on the contrary their hiſtory and laws were put into the common language: The people were commanded to make themſelves thoroughly acquainted with the laws that were given them, and with the hiſtory of thoſe facts by which their law was eſtabliſhed. It was urged upon them in the name of God himſelf to meditate upon them continually, to ſpeak of them in their houſes, and teach them diligently to their children. They were taught to believe that their intereſt in the favour of God, their public and private happineſs depended upon it. No part of their hiſtory and laws was kept as a ſecret from the people: All was open and undiſguiſed. And this was ſo different from the arts of impoſtors, or of deſigning politicians, as affords a ſtrong preſumption, that all was founded on truth and fact. LETTER XI.

Our author is very willing to have it believed, that theſe writings were forged after the time of *Moſes*. And the time he ſeems to fix upon as the likelieſt for ſuch a forgery is that of the judges. But there is not the leaſt foundation for ſuch a ſuppoſition. To ſuppoſe them to have been forged in the time of *Joſhua*, or the elders that immediately ſucceeded him, is the ſame thing as to ſuppoſe them to have been forged in the days of *Moſes* himſelf. It muſt then have been very well known, whether theſe were the laws that were given by *Moſes*, and whether the facts there referred to as things of public no-

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toriety, and known to the whole nation, were really done or not. Since great numbers muſt have been able to contradict or detect them, if they had been falſe. And after the death of *Joſhua*, and the elders that had lived in the time of *Moſes* and ſeen thoſe mighty acts, who could have had authority enough to have impoſed thoſe laws and facts upon the people? The deliverance out of *Egypt*, the ſojourning of the *Iſraelites* in the wilderneſs, the laws and conſtitutions appointed by *Moſes* in the name of God, the extraordinary facts ſaid to have been wrought by him, their introduction into *Canaan*, and the manner of their ſettlement there, muſt have been comparatively freſh in their remembrance. It appears by *Jephthah*'s anſwer to the king of the *Ammonites*, that the people of *Iſrael* were in his time very well acquainted with their own hiſtory, and with what had happened to them in the time of *Moſes*, *Judges* xi. 12, *&c.* The ſame thing appears from the Song of *Deborah*, Ch. v. 4, 5. and from the anſwer of *Gideon*, Ch. vi. 13. And it cannot without great abſurdity be ſuppoſed, that they could at that time have had a body of laws impoſed upon them as the laws of *Moſes*, and laws by which their nation had been governed ever ſince his time, tho' they had not known thoſe laws before: Or, that they could have been made to believe that the facts referred to in thoſe books were facts of which their whole nation had been witneſſes, and which they themſelves had received from

their

their anceſtors, and the memory of which had been conſtantly preſerved among them, though they had never heard of theſe facts: Or, that ſuch and ſuch ſacred rites and ordinances had been inſtituted, and conſtantly obſerved and ſolemnized in their nation in remembrance of thoſe facts, if till then they had been utter ſtrangers to the obſervance of theſe rites. And what renders this ſtill more improbable is, that during that period there was for the moſt part no general governor who had authority over the whole, as the kings had afterwards. The ſeveral tribes ſeem to have been very much in a ſtate of independency, and to have had the government within themſelves. Few of their judges exerciſed an authority over all the tribes; nor were any of them prieſts till the time of *Eli*. In ſuch a ſtate of things, how was it poſſible to have impoſed a new body of laws and hiſtory upon the whole nation, eſpecially laws ſo different from the laws and cuſtoms of all other countries, and which enacted the ſevereſt penalties againſt the idolatries to which the neighbouring nations were ſo ſtrongly addicted, and which the *Iſraelites* were ſo prone to imitate? If ſome of the tribes had received them, what likelihood is there that all would have done ſo, or would have regarded them as the laws of *Moſes*, and as obligatory on the whole community, when they were ſo contrary to their own inclinations, and had never been impoſed upon their nation before? Nothing leſs than ſuch an authority

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authority as that which *Moſes* claimed in the name of God himſelf, and which was inforced by ſuch illuſtrious divine atteſtations, could have prevailed with them to have ſubmitted to thoſe laws, or to have received thoſe facts. To which it may be added, that it is manifeſt from the account given in the book of *Judges*, which is the only account of that time that we have to depend upon, that the general ſtate of things during that period was this. The people frequently fell into a compliance with the idolatrous rites of the neighbouring countries. But when public calamities befel them, and which they regarded as puniſhments upon them for their tranſgreſſions of their law, they were made ſenſible of their guilt, and again returned to the obſervation of it, and to the adoration of the only true God as there preſcribed; and they were encouraged by the great things God had formerly done for their nation, to apply to him for deliverance from their oppreſſors. So that every thing during that period ſhews, that the law of *Moſes*, and the worſhip of God and of him alone, free from idolatry and polytheiſm, was then the eſtabliſhed conſtitution, which they themſelves regarded as of divine authority, notwithſtanding they too often ſuffered themſelves to be ſeduced into deviations from it.

After the æra of the Judges followed that of the Kings. King *David* lived very early in that period. And it appeareth with the utmoſt evidence from the hiſtory and writings of that

great prince, that the law of *Moſes* was then had in the higheſt veneration as of divine authority, and that the facts there recorded were univerſally believed and acknowleged. And though ſome of the ſucceeding Kings deviated from that law into the idolatries of the neighbouring nations, yet that law never loſt its authority; and the obſervation of it was ſoon reſtored. The deſign of the prophets, of whom there was a ſucceſſion during that period, was to keep the people cloſe to the obſervance of that law: And the extraordinary facts by which the authority of it was eſtabliſhed, were ſtill had in remembrance. And on the credit of that law, and of thoſe extraordinary facts, they ſtill looked upon themſelves to be God's peculiar people. This writer indeed takes upon him to aſſert, that "there were times when they had actually no "body of law among them, particularly in the "reign of *Joſiah* when it had been long loſt*." But there is no ground to ſuppoſe, that ever there was a time under any of their Kings, when they had actually no body of law among them, or that the book of the law of *Moſes* had been ever entirely loſt. This cannot be juſtly concluded from the ſurprize expreſſed at *Hilkiah* the High Prieſt's finding the book of the law of the Lord in the temple, when they repaired it in *Joſiah*'s reign. For this is juſtly ſuppoſed to be either the original book of the law written by *Moſes* himſelf, and ordered to be lodged in

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* Vol. III. p. 276.

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a coffer at the ſide of the ark, and which was found when the ark was removed on occaſion of the temple and holy of holies being repaired: Or at leaſt an authentic copy of great antiquity and authority kept in the temple, and which might have been neglected, or thought to have been loſt. But it would be abſurd to imagine, that there was no copy of the law at all remaining in any private hands, or in the hands of any of the Prieſts or Prophets. And it may very reaſonably be conceived, that upon finding an authentic book of the law of ſuch venerable antiquity, the attention of the King and great men might be more thoroughly awakened to the things contained there, and they might make a much ſtronger impreſſion upon them, than they had ever done before, even ſuppoſing they had read or heard the ſame things out of ſome other copy of the law of leſs authority, and which was not ſo much to be depended upon. There is not one word in the account that is given us of this matter of what our author mentions concerning the little time the reading of the book in the preſence of the King took up; from whence he concludes that it contained nothing but the law ſtrictly ſo called, or the recapitulation of it in the book of *Deuteronomy*. Though if that copy had contained no more than the book of *Deuteronomy*, this is a collection not only of the principal laws given by *Moſes*, but of the extraordinary and miraculous facts whereby the divine authority of the law was atteſted.

teſted. As to what he inſinuates, that all the ſacred writings of the *Jews* were compoſed after the captivity, and that *Eſdras* and his ſucceſſors compiled the written law *, I ſhall not add any thing here to what I have elſewhere offered to demonſtrate the palpable falſhood and abſurdity of ſuch a ſuppoſition †, I ſhall only at preſent obſerve, that the preſerving of the *Pentateuch* among the *Samaritans*, between whom, from the time of their firſt ſettling in that country, and the *Jews*, there was a fixed antipathy and oppoſition, affordeth a plain proof that the code of the *Moſaic* hiſtory and laws was not the invention or compoſition of *Eſdras*, but had been preſerved among the *Iſraelites* of the ten tribes, in place of whom the *Samaritans* came. And the remarkable conformity there is between the *Samaritan* and *Jewiſh* code of the *Pentateuch* both in the laws and in the facts, gives a ſignal confirmation of the antiquity and integrity of the *Moſaic* hiſtory and laws: And how far the *Hebrew* code is to be depended upon.

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But to proceed to Lord *Bolingbroke*'s farther objections. In order to deſtroy the credit of the *Moſaic* hiſtory he hath taken all occaſions to charge it with inconſiſtencies and contradictions. Thus he tells us, that the *Moſaic* account is plainly inconſiſtent with itſelf, in ſuppoſing that the unity of God was the original tradition derived from *Adam*, and yet that it was loſt, and

* Vol. IV. p. 339. Vol. V. p. 229. † See Reflections on Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory, p. 51, *et ſeq.*

polytheiſm

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polytheiſm eſtabliſhed in its ſtead in the days of *Serug:* Or at leaſt of *Terah* and *Abraham*, four hundred years after the deluge. He thinks it abſurd to ſuppoſe "that the knowlege of the exiſtence of that God who had deſtroyed and reſtored the world, juſt before, could be wholly loſt in the memory of mankind, and his worſhip entirely forgot, whilſt the eye-witneſſes of the deluge were yet alive *." The whole force of this objection depends upon his own abſurd way of ſtating the caſe, as if the knowlege of the exiſtence of the one true God, were ſuppoſed to be then entirely loſt and forgotten among mankind. True religion and the pure worſhip of God might have been conſiderably corrupted in that time, and idolatry might have made a great progreſs, though the knowlege of the true God was not entirely loſt and forgotten among men: As our author himſelf, when it is for his purpoſe, thinks fit to own.

With the ſame view of proving inconſiſtencies on the *Moſaic* hiſtory, he obſerves, that "it is repugnant to human nature to ſuppoſe, that the *Iſraelites* ſhould, in the courſe of ſo few generations, become confirmed and hardened idolaters in *Egypt*, and ſhould in ſo ſhort a time not only forget the traditions of their fathers, and the God of *Abraham*, of *Iſaac*, and of *Jacob:* But that they ſhould have been as much wedded to idolatry, as the *Egyptians* themſelves were †." He himſelf furniſheth

* Vol. IV. p. 19, 20. 217, 218. † *Ib.* p. 222, 223.

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an anſwer to this, when he obſerves that "po- LETTER XI.
"lytheiſm and idolatry have a cloſe connection
"with the ideas and affections of rude and ig-
"norant men." And that "the vulgar em-
"brace polytheiſm and idolatry very eaſily, even
"after the true doctrine of a divine unity has
"been taught and received *." It may well be conceived, that during their abode in *Egypt* the *Iſraelites* might have contracted a great fondneſs for the *Egyptian* cuſtoms. They might be allured by the power and ſplendor of the *Egyptians*, to entertain a good opinion of their religion: And the extreme miſery and diſtreſs to which they were reduced by their ſervitude might lead many of them to queſtion the promiſes made to *Abraham* and their anceſtors, and make them more ready to deviate from the religion derived to them from their fathers; tho' there is no reaſon to think they entirely forgot it, but mixed idolatrous rites with it. And even after their deliverance from *Egypt*, the idolatrous habits and cuſtoms many of them had ſo deeply imbibed, were not ſoon laid aſide. It may eaſily be ſuppoſed, that they would endeavour to reconcile and unite them with the religion *Moſes* taught them. And this ſeems particularly to have been the caſe with regard to the worſhip of the golden calf. He mentions it as an incredible thing that "they forgot the true God
"even when he conducted them through the
"deſart: They revolted from him even whilſt

* Vol. IV. p. 21, 22.

"the

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" the peals of thunder that proclaimed his de-
" ſcent on the mountain rattled in their ears,
" and whilſt he dictated his laws to them †."
He adds, that "if the miracles recorded to have
" been wrought had been really wrought, no-
" thing leſs than the greateſt of all miracles
" could have made theſe real miracles ineffec-
" tual." "I know farther, ſays he, moſt in-
" tuitively that no creature of the ſame nature
" as I am of, and I preſume the *Iſraelites* were
" human creatures, could reſiſt the evidence of
" ſuch revelations, ſuch miracles, and ſuch tra-
" ditions, as are recorded in the bible——That
" they muſt have terrified the moſt audacious,
" and have convinced the moſt incredulous ‡."
Thus with a view to deſtroy the credit of the *Moſaic* hiſtory, he cries up the irreſiſtible force of the revelations and miracles wrought among the *Iſraelites*. But perhaps he could not be ſo ſure, as he pretends, what he himſelf might have done in thoſe circumſtances. There is ſcarce any anſwering for the extravagancies and inconſiſtencies which human nature may fall into. But he goes all along upon a wrong ſuppoſition, as he had done before, as if the *Iſraelites* had entirely forgotten God, or intended abſolutely to abandon his worſhip. This was not their intention in the inſtance he ſeems to have had particularly in his view, their worſhipping the golden calf. For it is evident, they did not deſign to renounce the one true God, the God of

† Vol. IV. p. 223. ‡ *Ib.* p. 225.

Iſrael,

Iſrael, and to diſcard his worſhip. This appears from *Aaron*'s proclaiming on that occaſion a feaſt to the Lord, *Jehovah*; and from the people's declaring, *Theſe be thy Gods, O Iſrael*; or as it is elſewhere rendered, *This is thy God, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt*, Exod. xxxii. 4, 5. compared with *Nehem.* ix. 18. Nothing can be plainer than that they intended by it to worſhip the God of *Iſrael*, who they knew had ſo lately brought them out of the land of *Egypt*; and that the worſhip they rendered to the calf was not deſigned to terminate there, but was done with a reference to the Lord, *Jehovah*, whom they were for worſhiping by that ſymbol. They might therefore flatter themſelves, that this was conſiſtent with their acknowleging no other God but one, which had been ſo ſolemnly injoined them: And that the prohibition of bowing down before any image was deſigned only to forbid the worſhiping falſe Gods, not the true God by ſuch a ſymbol. This indeed was an inexcuſable contravention of the law which had been juſt promulgated with great ſolemnity, and which was intended to forbid their worſhiping and bowing down before any image of the Deity under any pretence whatſoever. But it was what minds ſo ſtrongly prepoſſeſſed with the notions and prejudices they had imbibed in *Egypt*, might be ſuppoſed capable of falling into. I would obſerve, by the way, that the recording this ſtory affords a ſignal proof of the impartiality of the

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LETTER XI. sacred historian. Nothing but the strictest regard to truth, could have prevailed with him to have inserted a thing which has been so often mentioned to the dishonour of that people, even by their own writers, and by others ever since. And it is very probable, that if the people in after-times durst have made any alteration in the original sacred records, they would have struck it out for the same reason for which *Josephus* has omitted it, as he has done some other things, which he thought would turn to the discredit of his nation.

Another attempt this writer makes against the credit of the *Mosaic* history, relates to the account given of their exode. He thinks it incredible that "the *Israelites* should bear the oppressions of the *Egyptians*, when they were become so vastly numerous, and could bring six hundred thousand fighting men into the field, which was an army sufficient to have conquered *Egypt* ‖. But what could be expected from an undisciplined and unarmed multitude, however numerous, against the force of a powerful kingdom? Especially when their spirits had been depressed by a long slavery, and a series of grievous oppressions; in which cases vast multitudes have been kept in subjection by a very few, of which there are many instances in history. In what follows he lets us know that he thinks the accounts given by Pagan authors of their exode not wholly fabulous, and that "an

‖ Vol. V. p. 141.

" epidemical infectious diſtemper in the lower *Egypt*, might make *Pharaoh* deſirous to drive the inhabitants of that part of his kingdom into the neighbouring deſarts.—That many of the inhabitants of the lower *Egypt* were included with the *Iſraelites* in that tranſmigration, and that a common diſtemper, rather than a common religion, united them in it." And again, he mentions it as a reaſon of the *Iſraelites* ſtaying forty years in the wilderneſs; that "it was a ſufficient time to wear out the leproſy, with which, profane hiſtory aſſures us, they were infected †." Thus he is for reviving a falſe and ſcandalous ſtory, the abſurdity of which has been ſo often expoſed. The different accounts given by the Pagan authors, relating to that matter, will naturally lead every intelligent reader to conclude that the *Egyptians* endeavoured to conceal and diſguiſe the truth. They could not deny the departure of the *Iſraelites* out of *Egypt*, and that it was in a manner and with circumſtances very diſagreeable to them; yet they did not think it conſiſtent with the honour of their own nation, to relate the fact with all its circumſtances as it really happened. But of all the ſtories they trumped up on that occaſion, that of the *Iſraelites* being expelled on the account of their being generally infected with the leproſy, is the moſt fooliſh and ridiculous. It appears indeed by the laws and conſtitutions of

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† Vol. V. p. 142. 144, 145.

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Moſes, that there were leproſies, and other cutaneous diſtempers among the *Iſraelites*, as well as among the neighbouring nations in that part of the world, but it alſo appears with invincible evidence that the body of that people were not infected with thoſe diſtempers, and that there were comparatively very few who were ſo; ſince the infected were ordered to be put out of the camp, and were treated in ſuch a way as they could not have been treated, if a great part of the people had been leprous. But any ſtory is catched at, however void of all appearance of truth, that tends to caſt diſgrace upon the *Jews*, and the holy Scriptures.

The only remaining objection againſt the *Moſaic* hiſtory, and which indeed ſeems to be what he layeth the principal ſtreſs upon is, that it is repugnant to the experience of mankind. That "incredible anecdotes are not mentioned ſeldom or occaſionally in them, as in *Livy*, or other hiſtorians, but the whole hiſtory is founded on ſuch, and conſiſts of little elſe." He compares thoſe that ſpeak of the *Pentateuch* as an authentic hiſtory to *Don Quixote*, and repreſents them as *not much leſs mad than he* was. "When I ſit down, ſays he, to read this hiſtory, I am ready to think myſelf tranſported into a ſort of fairy-land, where every thing is done by magic and inchantment: Where a ſyſtem of nature very different from ours prevails; and all I meet with is repugnant to my experience, and to the cleareſt and moſt diſtinct

"ideas

" ideas I have. Almoſt every event in it is in- LETTER XI.
" credible in its cauſes or conſequences, and I
" muſt accept or reject the whole‡." What his Lordſhip ſays amounts in other words to this; that this hiſtory gives an account of a ſeries of miraculous facts and events, which were not according to the uſual and ordinary courſe of things. This will be eaſily acknowleged. But it is denied, that this is a juſt or ſufficient objection againſt the truth or authenticity of the hiſtory, or a valid reaſon why it ſhould be rejected. On the contrary, if the facts there related had been only of the ordinary kind, they would not have anſwered the end which the divine wiſdom had in view. It was neceſſary as the caſe was circumſtanced, that they ſhould be miraculous, and therefore their being miraculous is not a proof of their being falſe. And conſidered in their cauſes and conſequences they are ſo far from being incredible, that taking in their cauſes and conſequences they claim our belief and veneration. The way of arguing made uſe of by our author, and others of the Deiſtical Writers in ſuch caſes deſerves to be remarked. If the fact advanced in proof of a divine revelation may poſſibly be accounted for in a natural way, then they are no miracles at all, and cannot give a ſufficient atteſtation to the truth and authority of a ſupernatural revelation: And if they are of an extraordinary nature, and out of the common courſe of our experience,

‡ Vol. III. p. 280.

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and manifeſtly tranſcend all human power, then the very extraordinarineſs of the facts, and their being miraculous, though it is proper in ſuch circumſtances they ſhould be ſo, is made a reaſon for rejecting them.

But that we may conſider this matter more diſtinctly, it is to be obſerved, that it cannot be pretended that the facts recorded in the books of *Moſes* are abſolutely impoſſible, or beyond the power of God to effect. If any reaſon therefore can be aſſigned to ſhew, that it was proper they ſhould be wrought, and that it was worthy of the divine wiſdom to interpoſe in ſo extraordinary a way, thoſe facts however miraculous they are ſuppoſed to be, become credible. And if to this it be added, that we have all the proofs that theſe facts were actually done, which the nature of the thing can admit of, or which could be reaſonably deſired ſuppoſing thoſe things to have really happened, this is all that can be juſtly expected, and it would be unreaſonable to inſiſt on more.

The caſe that is here ſuppoſed is this. That when the nations had fallen from the worſhip and adoration of the one true God, and him only, and became involved in ſuperſtition, polytheiſm, and idolatry, which was ſtill growing and ſpreading and in danger of becoming univerſal, it pleaſed God in his great wiſdom and goodneſs, in order to put a check to the ſpreading idolatry, and to preſerve his knowlege and worſhip among men, to interpoſe in an extraordinary way,

way, by eſtabliſhing among a people choſen for that purpoſe a conſtitution of a peculiar kind, the fundamental principle of which was the acknowlegement and adoration of the one true God in oppoſition to all idolatry and polytheiſm. And in order to give weight to this conſtitution it was ſo ordered, that its divine authority was confirmed by a ſeries of wonderful acts, which exhibited the moſt illuſtrious diſplays of his divine power and glory. And this conſtitution was deſigned farther to prepare the way for another diſpenſation, which was intended to be of a more general extent, and in which religion was in due ſeaſon to be publiſhed to the world in its moſt perfect form. LETTER XI.

This is a general view of the caſe, let us now examine it more diſtinctly.

And firſt, that at the time when the law of *Moſes* and the *Iſraelitiſh* conſtitution was firſt eſtabliſhed, idolatry and polytheiſm was generally ſpread through the nations, is a fact that can ſcarce be conteſted. This appears from all the remaining monuments of thoſe times as far as we can carry our enquiries. Nor could Lord *Bolingbroke* deny it. On the contrary he acknowleges, as ſhall be more particularly obſerved afterwards, that ſo great and general was the attachment of the people to idolatry and polytheiſm, that the moſt celebrated legiſlators of antiquity, were every-where obliged to fall in with it. And he himſelf aſſerts, that "polytheiſm and idolatry have ſo cloſe a connection

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" with the ideas and affections of rude and ig-
" norant men, that one of them could not fail
" to be their firſt religious principle, nor the
" other their firſt religious practice *." This may be thought to be a carrying it too far, but it is certain, that if we judge from fact and experience, there would have been little hope or expectation of recovering mankind from the idolatry and corruption into which they were fallen, without ſome extraordinary expedient, above what either the legiſlators or philoſophers were able to effect.

If therefore it pleaſed God to interpoſe in an extraordinary manner for this purpoſe, it ought to be acknowleged to have been a ſignal inſtance both of his wiſdom and of his goodneſs. Our author himſelf repreſents it as a fundamental article of the religion of nature, that " the Su-
" preme Being is the true, and only true, ob-
" ject of our adoration †." He calls this *that firſt and great principle of natural theology*, and the *angular ſtone of true Theiſm*. If ever therefore it was worthy of God to interpoſe at all, or to concern himſelf with the affairs of men, here was a proper occaſion for it, for maintaining and preſerving that fundamental principle of all religion, which was become ſo greatly corrupted and perverted among men, and overwhelmed under an amazing load of ſuperſtitions and idolatries.

* Vol. IV. p. 21. † Vol. V. p. 98.

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This accordingly was the excellent deſign of the *Moſaic* conſtitution, and of all the extraordinary atteſtations whereby the divine authority of it was eſtabliſhed. It is undeniably manifeſt, that the chief aim of that whole diſpenſation, and the principal point to which all its laws were directed, was to eſtabliſh the worſhip and adoration of the one true God, the maker and preſerver of all things, the Supreme Lord and Governor of the world, and of him alone, and to forbid and ſuppreſs, as far as its influence reached, that idolatry and ſuperſtition, which the wiſe men of other nations humoured and encouraged, and thought it impoſſible to ſubdue. If we compare the *Moſaic* inſtitutions with theirs, we ſhall find a vaſt difference between them. Lord *Bolingbroke*, ſpeaking of the mighty degree of wealth and power to which the antient prieſts, who were alſo the antient philoſophers and wiſe men, arrived in *Egypt*, *Ethiopia*, and the great eaſtern kingdoms, tells us, that "the general "ſcheme of their policy ſeems to have been this. "They built their whole ſyſtem of philoſophy "on the ſuperſtitious opinions and practices that "had prevailed in days of the greateſt ignorance. They had other expedients which they "employed artfully and ſucceſsfully. Moſt of "their doctrines were wrapped up in the ſacred "veil of allegory. Moſt of them were propagated in the myſterious cypher of ſacred dia-"lects, of ſacerdotal letters, and of hieroglyphical characters: And the uſeful diſtinction

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"of

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" of an outward and inward doctrine was in-
" vented, one for the vulgar, and one for the
" initiated §." He afterwards obſerves, that
" the worſhip of one God, and the ſimplicity
" of natural religion, would not ſerve their turn.
" Gods were multiplied, that devotions, and all
" the profitable rites and ceremonies that belong
" to them, might be ſo too. The inviſible
" *Mithras*, without the viſible, would have been
" of little value to the *Magi* ‖." It ought therefore to give us a very advantageous notion of the divinity of the law of *Moſes*, and the truth of his pretenſions, that the method he took was entirely different: And that he was far from making uſe of thoſe arts and expedients, which the antient prieſts and ſages of the Eaſt thought neceſſary. He did not found his theology on falſe popular opinions: On the contrary, the fundamental principle of his ſyſtem was ſubverſive of that polytheiſm, which his Lordſhip repreſents as the natural belief of men in the firſt uncultivated ages, and to which a great part of mankind in every age have been undeniably very prone. No variety or multiplicity of Gods was allowed in his conſtitution; no falſe or idolatrous devotions in order to bring a greater revenue to the prieſts. He did not conceal his doctrines and laws in the cypher of ſacred dialects, and ſacerdotal letters, and hieroglyphical characters. His laws and doctrines were all deſigned for public univerſal uſe: And there was

§ Vol. IV. p. 42, 43, 44. ‖ *Ib.* p. 49.

no

no ſuch thing in his ſyſtem as ſecret doctrines to be communicated only to a few, and concealed from the vulgar. On the contrary, it was a maxim that lay at the foundation of that conſtitution, that all the people were to be inſtructed in the knowlege and worſhip of the one true God free from idolatry, and to be made acquainted with his laws and the duties there required. And though our author ſpeaks of the allegories in the Old Teſtament, as if *allegory paſſed for a literal relation of facts* among them, it is certain that in the hiſtorical parts of the Bible, particularly in the *Moſaic* hiſtory, the facts are generally delivered in a plain, ſimple, narrative ſtile, obvious to the capacities of the people.

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His Lordſhip ſpeaks with high approbation of the celebrated legiſlators of antiquity, whom he repreſents as *the firſt*, and he *ſuppoſes the beſt miſſionaries that have been ſeen in the world**. He inſtances in *Mercury*, *Zoroaſter*, *Zamolxis*, *Minos*, *Charondas*, *Numa*—And having told us, that they all, to give the greater ſanction to their religious and civil inſtitutions, pretended to communications with their Gods, or to revelations from them, he declares, that he believes it probable, that "many of the reformers of mankind had diſcovered the exiſtence of the one "Supreme Being; but this knowlege might "ſeem to them not ſufficiently adapted to the "character of the people with whom they had

* Vol. IV. p. 25.

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"to do."——He adds, that "it was neceſſary "in their opinion to ſuit their doctrine to the "groſs conceptions of the people, and to raiſe "ſuch affections and paſſions by human images, "and by objects that made ſtrong impreſſions "on ſenſe, as might be oppoſed with ſucceſs "to ſuch as were raiſed by ſenſible images and "objects too, and were deſtructive of order, and "pernicious to ſociety. They employed, for "reforming the manners of the half-ſavage "people they civilized, the dread of ſuperior "powers, maintained and cultivated by ſuper-"ſtition, and applied by policy †." Thus, Lord *Bolingbroke*, notwithſtanding the zeal he profeſſes for true theiſm, is pleaſed mightily to admire and applaud the antient legiſlators, who, by his own account, countenanced and encouraged polytheiſm and idolatry; whilſt he abuſes and vilifies *Moſes*, the main deſign of whoſe law was to forbid and ſuppreſs it. Indeed the method he took was ſuch as ſhewed that his law had an higher original than human policy. He eſtabliſhed the worſhip of the one true God, the Creator and Governor of the univerſe, and of him only, as the foundation and central point of his whole ſyſtem. Nor did he, in order to *ſuit* his *doctrine to the groſs conceptions of the people*, indulge them in that idolatry and polytheiſm to which the nations were ſo generally and ſtrongly addicted. All worſhip of inferior deities was prohibited. And he expreſly forbad the *Hebrews*

† Vol. IV. p. 26, 27.

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to repreſent the pure eſſence of the Deity by any corporeal form, that he might accuſtom them to a more ſpiritual adoration of the Supreme Being: And if, as our author alleges, he adopted ſome of the *Egyptian* rites and cuſtoms in accommodation to the weakneſs and prejudices of the people*, though this is far from being ſo certain as he pretends, we may be ſure they were only ſuch as might be innocently uſed, and not ſuch as had a tendency to lead the people into idolatry, or out of which idolatry aroſe: For all things of this kind he ſtrongly and moſt expreſly prohibited: And therefore commanded the people *not to do after the doings of the land of Egypt*, or to *walk after their ordinances*, Lev. xviii. 3. The other legiſlators pretended, as well as he, to communications with the divinity, yet whatever their private opinion might be, they durſt not ſo much as attempt to take the people off from the ſuperſtition and idolatry they were ſo fond of. The reaſon was, they were ſenſible that their communication with the Deity was only pretended; and therefore they could not depend upon any extraordinary aſſiſtance to carry their deſigns into execution. But *Moſes* not only pretended to have received his laws from God, but knew that it really was ſo, and was able to give the moſt convincing proofs of his divine miſſion. He was ſure of a ſupernatural aſſiſtance, and this enabled him to accompliſh what

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* Vol. IV. p. 31. 34.

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the ableſt legiſlators of antiquity did not dare to attempt. His Lordſhip obſerves, "that the "*Iſraelites* had the moſt ſingular eſtabliſhments "eccleſiaſtical and civil, that ever was formed†." And it muſt be acknowleged to have been in many reſpects very different from that which obtained in other nations. And it can hardly be conceived, how, as things were circumſtanced, it could have been eſtabliſhed among the *Iſraelites*, but in an extraordinary and miraculous way. The very nature of the conſtitution furniſheth a ſtrong preſumption of the truth of the miraculous facts by which the authority of it was atteſted and confirmed, and rendereth the whole account conſiſtent and credible.

The chief objection which is urged againſt this, is drawn from the abſurdity of ſuppoſing, that God ſhould ſelect a people to himſelf, among whom he would erect a peculiar conſtitution for preſerving his knowlege and worſhip, apart from the reſt of mankind. Or however, "if he had "thought fit, that the ſacred depoſite ſhould "be truſted to a people choſen to preſerve it "till the coming of the *Meſſiah*, no people was "leſs fit than the *Iſraelites* to be choſen for this "great truſt on every account. They broke the "truſt continually. The revelations made to "them, were, as Mr. *Locke* obſerves, ſhut up "in a little corner of the world, amongſt a "people, by that very law which they received "with it, excluded from a commerce and com-

† Vol. V. p. 144.

"muni-

" munication with the reſt of mankind. A people ſo little known, and contemned by " thoſe that knew them, were very unfit, and " unable to propagate the doctrine of one God " in the world." He asks, " Wherefore then " was this depoſite made to them? It was of no " uſe to other nations before the coming of " Chriſt, nor ſerved to prepare them for the re- " ception of the Goſpel. And after his coming " it was in this great reſpect of little uſe, if of " any, to the *Jews* themſelves *."

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There is ſcarce any thing that has been more the ſubject of ridicule, than the *Jews* being a choſen race, diſtinguiſhed from all other nations of the earth. And yet that the *Jews* were remarkably diſtinguiſhed above other nations, for the knowlege and worſhip of the one true God, is a matter of fact which cannot poſſibly be denied. Whoſoever reads the monuments of heathen antiquity, of which there are very large remains extant, the conſtitution of their laws, and ſyſtem of their policy, and the writings of their hiſtorians, poets, and philoſophers, and compares them with the *Jewiſh*, will find an aſtoniſhing difference, that cannot but ſtrike every man who conſiders it. It muſt be acknowleged, that many of the heathen nations, particularly thoſe of *Greece* and *Rome*, were renowned for learning and politeneſs, peculiarly eminent for their knowlege in the liberal arts and ſciences, and for the fineneſs of their taſte in works of genius

* Vol. V. p. 242, 243.

and

LETTER XI. and literature, which has rendered them the admiration of all ſucceeding ages. But in matters of religion we meet every-where with the moſt unqueſtionable proofs of the groſſeſt idolatry and polytheiſm, in which not only were the vulgar univerſally involved, but it was countenanced and practiſed by the wiſeſt and greateſt men. That public worſhip, which was inſtituted by their moſt celebrated legiſlators, and a conformity to which was recommended by the philoſophers, was directed to a multiplicity of deities. On the other hand, if we turn our views to the *Jews*, a people no way eminent for their knowlege in the arts and ſciences, we ſhall find that monotheiſm, the firſt and great principle, as he calls it, of natural theology, the acknowlegement and worſhip of the one true God, the Maker and Lord of the univerſe, and of him only, was the fundamental principle of their conſtitution, and of their ſtate, all worſhip of inferior deities, and of the true God by images was moſt expreſly prohibited in their laws. If we examine their writings, we may obſerve that they every-where diſcover the profoundeſt veneration for the Deity; they abound with the ſublimeſt ſentiments of his divine Majeſty, his incomparable perfections, his ſupreme dominion, and all-diſpoſing providence, and every-where expreſs an utter deteſtation of all idolatry and polytheiſm. Nor is this the ſpirit of their moral and devotional writings only, but of their hiſtorical too; the principal deſign of which is to promote the great ends of religion,

gion, by repreſenting the happy ſtate of their nation, when they adhered to the worſhip of God, and perſiſted in obedience to his laws, and the calamities and miſeries that befel them as a puniſhment for their defections and revolts. Their very poetry was vaſtly different from that of the heathen nations; not deſigned, like theirs, to celebrate the praiſes, the amours, the exploits of their fictitious deities, but fitted to inſpire the nobleſt ideas of God, and containing the moſt elevated deſcriptions of his glory and perfection. LETTER XI.

It is natural therefore to inquire, whence comes this amazing difference between the *Jews*, and the moſt learned and civilized heathen nations in the knowlege and worſhip of the deity. It is his Lordſhip's own obſervation, that "without "revelation the belief of the unity of God, could "not be the faith of any one people, till ob- "ſervation and meditation, till a full and vi- "gorous exerciſe of reaſon made it ſuch *." And again, he tells us, that "the rational, the or- "thodox belief, was not eſtabliſhed, nor could "be ſo, till the manhood of philoſophy ||." How comes it then that the public acknowlegement and adoration of the one true God free from polytheiſm and idolatry was the eſtabliſhed religion of the *Jews* only? Were they the only people who had reaſon in a full and vigorous exerciſe, and among whom philoſophy was arrived at its manhood? If ſo, it is wrong to re-

* Vol. IV. p. 20. || *Ib.* p. 22, 23.

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preſent them as the Deiſtical Writers have frequently done, as the moſt ſtupid of the human race, a people *ignorant and barbarous*, as he and Mr. *Hume* calls them. Nor had he a right to laugh at Mr. *Abbadie*, who, he ſays, has repreſented them as *a nation of ſages and philoſophers* ‡. It will be readily allowed, that the *Jews* were not of themſelves more wiſe and knowing, or better philoſophers than other nations, or that they made deeper obſervations and reflections, and that they were even inferior to ſome of them in ſeveral branches of ſcience. We have all the reaſon therefore in the world to conclude that if left to themſelves, they would have been involved in the common polytheiſm and idolatry, as well as all the nations round them: And that it was owing only to their having had the advantage of an extraordinary revelation, and to their peculiar conſtitution, which was of divine original, and which had been confirmed by the moſt illuſtrious atteſtations, that they became ſo remarkably diſtinguiſhed.

Lord *Bolingbroke* was very ſenſible how unfavourable this is to his cauſe, and therefore finds great fault with Mr. *Locke* for aſſuming, that the belief and worſhip of the one true God was the national religion of the *Iſraelites* alone, and that it was their particular privilege and advantage to know the true God, and his true worſhip, whilſt the heathen nations were in a ſtate of darkneſs and ignorance. To take off the force of this ſeems to be the principal deſign of

‡ Vol. III. p. 283.

his

his third Eſſay, which is of *the riſe and progreſs of monotheiſm* †. But what he offers to this purpoſe is extremely trifling. He is forced quite to alter the true ſtate of the queſtion, and ſuppoſes Mr. *Locke* and the Chriſtian divines to aſſert, that there was not any knowlege or worſhip of the true God in the world at all before the erection of the *Iſraelitiſh* polity, and that all the nations, except the *Iſraelites*, had been ignorant of the true God from the beginning. And then he argues, that "this implies that the "*Iſraelites* were a nation from the beginning;" and gravely asks, "Were they ſo, if we reckon "from *Adam*, or even from *Noah*, or even from the vocation of their father *Abraham* *." Thus he frames a ridiculous hypotheſis for his adverſaries, and then endeavours to expoſe it: Whereas they maintain what he thinks fit to deny, that the knowlege and worſhip of the true God was the original primitive religion of mankind, derived from the firſt parents and anceſtors of the human race: But that before the time of *Moſes* the nations were generally lapſed into polytheiſm and idolatry, which appears from his own acknowlegement, to have been the caſe. LETTER XI.

He affirms indeed, that "it is plain that the "knowlege of the one true God would have "been preſerved in the world, if no ſuch people "as the *Jews* had ever been. And nothing can "be more impertinent than the hypotheſis, that

† Vol. IV. p. 187, *et ſeq.* * *Ib.* p. 233.

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" this people, the leaſt fit perhaps on many ac-
" counts, that could have been choſen, was
" choſen to preſerve this knowlege. It was ac-
" quired, and it was preſerved independently of
" them among the heathen philoſophers. And
" it might have become, and probably did be-
" come the national belief in countries un-
" known to us, or even in thoſe who were
" fallen back into ignorance, before they ap-
" pear in the traditions we have*." What an extraordinary way of talking is this! He argues from the ſuppoſed national belief of countries unknown to us, and of which he confeſſes we have no traditions extant, to ſhew that religion would have been preſerved in the world, if no ſuch people as the *Jews* had ever been. As to the heathen philoſophers, among whom, he ſays, the knowlege of the true God was preſerved, it is certain, and he himſelf frequently owns it, that whatever knowlege ſome of them had this way, it was of little uſe to hinder the polytheiſm and idolatry of the people, and that inſtead of reclaiming them from it, they fell in with it themſelves, and even encouraged and adviſed the people to a compliance with the public laws and cuſtoms, by which polytheiſm was eſtabliſhed.

Thus it appears that after all the outcry and ridicule againſt the *Jews* as the unfitteſt people in the world to have the ſacred depoſite of the acknowlegement and adoration of the one true

* Vol. IV. p. 79.

God

God committed to them, they were the only people concerning whom we have any proofs that they made a public national acknowlegement of this great principle, and among whom it was eſtabliſhed as the fundamental law of their ſtate. It is urged indeed, that their conſtitution had little effect upon them. That "their "hiſtory is little elſe than a relation of their "rebelling and repenting; and theſe rebellions, "not thoſe of particular men, ſurpriſed and "hurried into diſobedience by their paſſions, "but national deliberate violations of the law, "in defiance of the Supreme Being*." But if we compare the hiſtory of the *Jews* with that of the heathen nations, we ſhall find a very remarkable difference between them. Notwithſtanding all the faults and defections of the former, and though they too often fell into idolatries and vicious practices in a conformity to the cuſtoms of the neighbouring countries, they again recovered from them, and returned to the acknowlegement and adoration of the one true God and him only, and often continued for a conſiderable number of years together in the profeſſion and practice of the true religion free from idolatry; of which there are many proofs in all the ages of their nation from the days of *Moſes* to the *Babyloniſh* captivity; during the time of their Judges, Kings, *&c.* as every one knows that is at all acquainted with their hiſtory. This was owing to the revelation they enjoyed:

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* Vol. V. p. 156.

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They ſtill had recourſe to their law, and by that reformed themſelves, and returned to the pure worſhip of God according to that law; to which after the *Babyloniſh* captivity, in which they had ſuffered ſo much for their defections and revolts, they adhered more cloſely than ever. But among the heathen nations, even thoſe of them that were moſt learned and civilized, ſuch as the *Grecians* and *Romans*, all was one continued courſe of polytheiſm, and the moſt abſurd idolatries. Nor can we name any period of their hiſtory, in which they laid aſide the public polytheiſm, and returned to the acknowlegement and adoration of the one true God, and of him only. It muſt be ſaid therefore that the *Jewiſh* hiſtory doth indeed furniſh plain proofs of what the author obſerves the proneneſs of mankind in all ages to polytheiſm and idolatry, but it ſhews at the ſame time, that by virtue of their peculiar conſtitution, the worſhip of God was maintained among them in a manner in which it was not in any other nation. And this affordeth a ſignal proof of the benefit of revelation, and how far ſuperior it is to the efforts of the wiſeſt lawgivers and philoſophers.

It appears then that the *Moſaic* conſtitution did anſwer very valuable ends. By this there was a people preſerved, among whom the knowlege and adoration of the one living and true God was maintained in a world over-run with ſuperſtition and idolatry; and to whom an admirable ſyſtem of laws was given. And not-

notwithſtanding all that is ſaid about the people of *Iſrael*, being ſhut up in a corner of the earth; they were placed in an advantageous ſituation, in the center of the then known world, between *Egypt* and *Arabia* on the one hand, and *Syria*, *Chaldea*, and *Aſſyria* on the other, among whom the firſt great empires were erected, and from whence knowlege and learning ſeems to have been derived to the weſtern parts of the world. And they were alſo in the neighbourhood of *Sidon* and *Tyre*, the greateſt emporiums in the world, from whence ſhips went to all parts, even the moſt diſtant countries. Their peculiar conſtitution, whereby they were ſo remarkably diſtinguiſhed from other nations, together with the extraordinary things God had done for them, had a natural tendency to put the neighbouring people upon enquiring into the deſign of all this, which would be apt to lead them to the adoration of the one true God, and into the knowlege of the true religion in its moſt neceſſary and important principles, and to diſcover to them the folly and unreaſonableneſs of their own ſuperſtition and idolatry. That this was really part of the deſign which the divine wiſdom had in view in this conſtitution, and that therefore it was intended to be of uſe to other nations beſides the people of *Iſrael*; plainly appears from many paſſages of Scripture †. They were indeed kept diſtinct from LETTER XI.

† See particularly Exod. vii. 15. ix. 16. xiv. 4. Numb. xiv. 13, 14, 21. Deut. iv. 6. 1 Kings viii. 41, 42, 43. Pſ. xxvi. 3.

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other people, and it was neceſſary for wiſe ends they ſhould be ſo: But they were always ready to receive among them thoſe of other nations who worſhiped the one true God, though they did not conform to the peculiar rites of their polity. And in the moſt flouriſhing times of their ſtate, particularly in the reigns of *David* and *Solomon*, they had an extenſive dominion and correſpondence. And afterwards they had frequent intercourſe with *Egypt*, *Syria*, *Aſſyria*, *Chaldea*, and *Perſia*. And if we conſider what is related concerning the Queen of *Sheba*, and *Hiram* King of *Tyre*, as well as the memorable decrees of *Nebuchadnezzar*, King of *Babylon*, *Darius* the *Mede*, *Cyrus*, *Darius Hyſtaſpes*, and *Artaxerxes*, Kings of *Perſia*, the greateſt monarchs then upon earth, and who publiſhed to the world the regard and veneration they had for the Lord *Jehovah*, the God whom the *Jews* worſhiped; it is very probable that the fame of their laws, and the remarkable interpoſitions of providence on their behalf, ſpread far and wide among the nations, and contributed in more inſtances than is commonly imagined, to keep up ſome knowlege of the true God, the Maker and Lord of the univerſe, and to give ſome check to the prevailing idolatry, and to preſerve the antient patriarchal religion from being utterly extinguiſhed. To which it may be added, that in the latter times of their ſtate, vaſt numbers of the *Jews* were diſperſed through *Egypt*, *Babylonia*, *Perſia*, and other

other parts of the eaſt; and afterwards through the *Leſſer Aſia*, and the ſeveral parts of the *Roman* empire: And they every-where turned many of the *Gentiles* from the common idolatry and polytheiſm; which the philoſophers were ſcarce able to effect in a ſingle inſtance. It appears then that the ſetting apart that people in ſo extraordinary a manner, the revelation that was given them, and the marvellous acts of divine providence towards them, were fitted for having an extenſive effect for the advantage of other nations as well as their own, and actually had that effect in multitudes of inſtances. By this conſtitution there was a light ſet up, ſhining in a dark place, to which other nations might have recourſe. And if inſtead of making uſe of it, as they ought to have done, they generally neglected it, and even hated and deſpiſed the *Jews* for having a religion ſo oppoſite to their own, and condemning their ſuperſtitions and idolatries; the fault is to be charged upon themſelves, who neglected thoſe means and helps, as they had done before the diſcoveries made to them by antient tradition, and which had been originally derived from revelation, and by the light of nature, and the works of creation and providence. Beſides this, what farther ſhews the great propriety and uſefulneſs of this peculiar conſtitution, and the revelation given to the people of *Iſrael* is, that it had a great tendency to prepare the world for receiving that more perfect diſpenſation which was to ſucceed it,

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and which was to be of a more general extent; and to be more univerſally diffuſed. The firſt harveſt of converts to Chriſtianity was among the *Jews* and their proſelytes, of whom great numbers were brought over to the Chriſtian faith. The *Jewiſh* Scriptures were generally diſperſed, and had ſpread the knowlege of God, and had raiſed an expectation of a glorious and divine perſon, by whom a new and moſt excellent diſpenſation was to be introduced, and the *Gentiles* were to be brought over, more generally than had hitherto been done, from their ſuperſtitions and idolatries, from their abominable vices and corruptions, to the pure worſhip of God, and the knowlege and practice of true religion. This glorious perſon was foretold and deſcribed in the *Jewiſh* prophecies by many remarkable characters, which being accompliſhed in our Saviour gave a moſt illuſtrious atteſtation to His divine miſſion. And theſe prophecies were kept more clear and diſtinct by being in the hands of a peculiar people as the depoſitaries of them: Whereas if they had been, like other traditions, left merely at large among the nations, they would probably in proceſs of time have been corrupted and loſt, and the teſtimony ariſing from them muſt have fallen.

Taking all theſe conſiderations together, it appears that the peculiar *Jewiſh* œconomy anſwered many very valuable and important ends: And that therefore it was no way unworthy of the divine wiſdom to interpoſe in an extraordinary

dinary manner to give a divine atteſtation to it. And that the miraculous facts, if really done, were every way ſufficient for this purpoſe, our author himſelf does not deny. On the contrary, he looks upon them to have been ſo ſtrong and convincing, that it would have been impoſſible to reſiſt them; and he thinks they muſt have been ſufficient, if they had been really done, to have brought over all mankind to the belief and acknowlegement of the one true God, not only in that age, but in all ſucceeding ages. His manner of expreſſing himſelf is remarkable. He ſays, that "the reviving and continuing the "primitive faith and worſhip by ſuch a ſeries of "revelations and miracles among one people, "would have made any revival of them un-"neceſſary among any other; becauſe they "would have been more than ſufficient to "continue them uncorrupted over the whole "world; not only till the vocation of *Abra-*"*ham*, four hundred years after the deluge, "not only till the coming of the *Meſſiah*, two "thouſand years after that, but even to this "hour, and to the conſummation of all "things ‖." Not to inſiſt upon the great abſurdity of his ſuppoſing, that the miracles wrought among the *Iſraelites* ſo long after the vocation of *Abraham*, would have been ſufficient to have kept the true religion uncorrupted till the vocation of *Abraham*; a blunder which could only have been owing to the moſt inex-

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‖ Vol. IV. p. 214.

cuſable

LETTER XI. cuſable negligence in writing: I think it follows from his own conceſſions, that the miracles and other extraordinary methods made uſe of for the eſtabliſhment of the *Moſaic* œconomy, were of ſuch a nature as to be well fitted to the end for which they were deſigned, the revival and eſtabliſhment of the worſhip of the one true God in oppoſition to idolatry and polytheiſm. And though it be wrong to ſuppoſe as he moſt abſurdly does, that they muſt have eſtabliſhed it among all mankind, and have prevented all deviations from it in all ages and nations; yet it will be acknowleged, that thoſe facts were of ſuch a kind as to have been ſufficient to convince all thoſe to whom they were known, that the laws, in atteſtation to which they were wrought, were of a divine original. Accordingly the people of *Iſrael*, notwithſtanding their proneneſs to idolatry, and their obſtinate prejudices, were brought to ſubmit to thoſe laws as of divine authority, and to receive them as the rule of their polity. And though they fell off on ſeveral occaſions to a compliance with the idolatries of the neighbouring nations, which they mixed with their own rites, yet the remembrance and belief of thoſe facts, which always continued among them, had mighty effects in every age of their ſtate, to bring them back to the true worſhip of God, and to an obedience to their laws. And they have had a great effect ever ſince, where-ever they have been believed, to fill men with a holy fear of God, and with the moſt

most adoring thoughts of his divine unequal'd majesty and glory. This effect they continue to have among Christians, and are like to have to the end of the world. LETTER XI.

It is no just objection against the truth of the facts, that they come to us through the hands of the *Jews*. For what other testimony can be reasonably desired, or can the nature of the thing admit of, than the concurrent testimony of that people, to whom the laws were given, and among whom the facts were done? A testimony continued throughout all the ages of their nation, and appearing in all their records and monuments. The facts were done among themselves; and therefore in the nature of things could only be witnessed by themselves. If those of any other nation had recorded them, they must have had their accounts from the people of *Israel*. And if they had declared their belief of those facts, and of the divine authority of those laws, there would have been an equal pretence for rejecting their testimony, as for rejecting that of the *Jews*. But it is in truth very absurd to make it an objection, that the accounts of these facts are transmitted to us by those who were the only proper persons to give an account of those facts, and by whom alone those accounts could have been originally given, if they had been true. If it be pretended, that the facts were feigned by them to do honour to their nation, it must be considered, that, as was before hinted, they are so circumstanced, and mixed with

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with ſuch diſadvantageous accounts of the temper and conduct of that people, as no man would have feigned who had their honour in view, or who had not a greater regard to the truth of the facts, than to the humouring and flattering that people. For it is plain, the facts might have been ſo contrived, if they had been fictitious, as to have ſaved the honour of their nation, and not to have given occaſion to the ſevere cenſures and reproaches which have been caſt upon them in all ages on that account. And what farther derives great credit to the relations of thoſe extraordinary and miraculous facts, is that the books in which they are contained, not only appear to have been written with an unaffected ſimplicity, and a ſincere impartial regard to truth, mixed with a profound veneration for the Deity, but they contain the moſt remarkable predictions of future events, which it was impoſſible for any human ſagacity to foreſee; particularly relating to the future fates of that nation, the ſurpriſing revolutions they ſhould undergo, the calamities, captivities, and deſolations that ſhould befal them, their being ſcattered and diſperſed all over the face of the earth, and every-where expoſed to hatred, contempt, and reproach, and yet ſtill wonderfully preſerved as a diſtinct people, as we ſee they are at this day; notwithſtanding they have for ſo many ages loſt their geneologies, and been deprived of their moſt valued privileges, and rendered incapable of exerciſing their moſt ſolemn ſacred rites

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as prescribed in their law, and without any prophets raised up among them, and acknowleged by themselves to be such, to support their hopes. These are things for which no parallel can be found in any other nation upon earth. So that the present state of that people, in all respects so extraordinary, is a living proof of the truth and divinity of those writings, which contain an account of the laws that were originally given them, and of the wonderful facts by which those laws were inforced and established. This is a proof still stronger to us, than it could have been in the ages soon after those books were written, and affordeth one instance in which the evidence of those facts, instead of being diminished by time, has acquired new strength and force. LETTER XI.

You will forgive the length of this letter, as I was willing to lay together in one view all that I thought necessary for clearing and establishing the truth of the *Mosaic* history against our author's objections, and which, if it be well supported, the divinity of those laws, and of that constitution, follows with invincible evidence.

LETTER

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The excellent nature and tendency of the Moſaic *Writings, and the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament. Lord* Bolingbroke *treats it as blaſphemy to ſay that they are divinely inſpired. A ſummary of his objections againſt their divine original and authority. His charge againſt the Scriptures as giving mean and unworthy ideas of God conſidered at large. The repreſentations he himſelf gives of God, and of his providence, ſhewn to be unworthy, and of the worſt conſequence. Concerning God's being repreſented in Scripture as entering into covenant with man. The pretence of his being deſcribed as a tutelary God to* Abraham, *and to the people of* Iſrael, *and of his being degraded to the meaneſt offices and employments, diſtinctly examined. The paſſages in which bodily parts ſeem to be aſcribed to God, not deſigned to be taken in a literal ſenſe. The Scripture itſelf ſufficiently guards againſt a wrong interpretation of theſe paſſages. In what ſenſe human paſſions and affections are attributed to the Supreme Being. A remarkable paſſage of Mr.* Collins *to this purpoſe.*

SIR,

SIR,

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THE deſign of my laſt Letter was to vindicate the truth and credit of the *Moſaic* Hiſtory, and of the extraordinary facts there related. And if that Hiſtory be admitted as true, the divine original and authority of the *Moſaic* conſtitution is eſtabliſhed. But beſides the external proofs ariſing from the extraordinary and miraculous facts, whoſoever with an unprejudiced mind looks into the Revelation itſelf as contained in the ſacred writings of the Old Teſtament, may obſerve remarkable internal characters, which demonſtrate its excellent nature and tendency. Not to repeat what has been already offered to this purpoſe in the former Volume, Let. XV. p. 478, *et ſeq.* at preſent I ſhall only obſerve, that in the *Moſaical* writings, and the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, we are taught to form the worthieſt notions of God, of his incomparable perfections, and of his governing providence, as extending over all his works, particularly towards mankind. We are at the ſame time inſtructed in the true ſtate of our own caſe, as we are weak, dependent, guilty creatures, and are directed to place our whole hope and truſt in God alone, and to refer all to him, as our chiefeſt good, and higheſt end; to be thankful to him for all the good things we enjoy, and to be patient and reſigned to his will under all the afflictive events that befal us. Our moral duty is there ſet before us in its juſt ex-

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tent. The particulars of it are laid down in plain and expreſs precepts, inforced upon us in the name and by the authority of God himſelf, where love of righteouſneſs, goodneſs, and purity, and juſt deteſtation of vice and wickedneſs, is repreſented in the ſtrongeſt manner. Thoſe ſacred writings every-where abound with the moſt encouraging declarations of his grace and mercy towards the truly penitent, and with the moſt awful denunciations of his juſt diſpleaſure againſt obſtinate preſumptuous tranſgreſſors. And the important leſſon which runs through the whole is this, that we are to make the pleaſing and ſerving God the chief buſineſs of our lives, and that our happineſs conſiſteth in his favour, which is only to be obtained in the uniform practice of piety and virtue.

Such evidently is the nature and tendency of the ſacred writings of the Old Teſtament. But very different is the repreſentation made of them by Lord *Bolingbroke*. Not content with endeavouring to deſtroy the credit of the hiſtory, he hath by arguments drawn from the nature of the revelation itſelf contained in the *Jewiſh* Scriptures, uſed his utmoſt efforts to ſhew, that it is abſolutely unworthy of God: That "there "are marks of an human original in thoſe "books, which point out plainly the fraud, "and the impoſture *." And that "it is no leſs "than blaſphemy to aſſert them to be divinely "inſpired †."

* Vol. III. p. 288. † *Ib.* p. 299.

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The objections he has advanced againſt the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, and eſpecially againſt the *Moſaic* writings, are principally theſe that follow: LETTER XII.

1. That they give the moſt unworthy ideas of the Supreme Being. They degrade him to the meaneſt offices and employments, and attribute to him human paſſions, and even the worſt of human imperfections.

2. Some of the laws there given are abſolutely contrary to the law of nature, which is the law of God, and therefore cannot be of divine original. He inſtanceth particularly in the command for extirpating the *Canaanites*, and for puniſhing idolaters with death.

3. The firſt principle of the law of *Moſes* is inſociability; and it took the *Jews* out of all moral obligations to the reſt of mankind.

4. There are ſeveral paſſages in the *Moſaic* writings, which are falſe, abſurd, and unphiloſophical: As particularly the account there given of the creation of the world, and the fall of man.

5. The ſanctions of the law of *Moſes* were wholly of a temporal nature, and were contrived and fitted to humour and gratify the appetites and paſſions; without any regard to a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments.

Theſe are the principal objections urged by Lord *Bolingbroke* againſt the divine authority of the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, and particularly of the books of *Moſes*. There are ſome

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other ſmaller exceptions, which I ſhall take notice of as they come in my way.

1. The firſt claſs of objections relateth to the mean and unworthy repreſentations that are made to us in Scripture of the Supreme Being. It hath always been accounted one of the diſtinguiſhing excellencies of the ſacred writings, that they abound with the moſt juſt and ſublime deſcriptions and repreſentations of the Deity, which have a manifeſt tendency to raiſe our minds to the moſt worthy and exalted conceptions of his divine majeſty, and his incomparable excellencies and perfections. Our author himſelf thinks fit to acknowlege, that "there "are many paſſages in Scripture, which give "moſt ſublime ideas of the majeſty of the Su-"preme Being:" And that "the conceptions "which the *Jews* entertained of the Supreme "Being were very orthodox in the eye of rea-"ſon; and their Pſalmiſts, and their prophets, "ſtrained their imaginations to expreſs the "moſt celebrated ſentiments of God, and of "his works, and of the methods of his provi-"dence *." If therefore there be any paſſages which, literally taken, ſeem to be unworthy of God, they ought, by all the rules of candour and fair criticiſm, to be interpreted in a conſiſtency with theſe; ſince it cannot be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that thoſe who entertained ſuch noble and ſublime ſentiments of the Divinity, ſhould at the ſame time, as he would perſuade us they

* Vol. III. p. 99.—Vol. IV. p. 463.

did,

did, form the meaneſt and unworthieſt concep- LETTER XII.
tions of him.

But let us conſider the particulars of his charge; and it amounts in effect to this: That the Scriptures degrade the Supreme Being, by repreſenting him as deſcending to the meaneſt offices and employments: And that they attribute to him human paſſions, and even the worſt of human imperfections.

As to the firſt part of the charge, the degrading the divine majeſty to the meaneſt, the unworthieſt, offices and employments, he obſerves, that according to the *Moſaic* account, "the Supreme Being condeſcended to be the "tutelary God of *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, "and under this character he acted a part which "a ſenſible heathen, not tranſported by pre- "ſumptuous notions of his own importance, "nor by the impudence of enthuſiaſm, would "have thought too mean and too low for any "of his inferior Gods or Demons *." This objection he frequently repeats in various forms. He introduces one of the heathen ſages as alleging, that "among the *Moſaic* ſuperſtitions "there was one, which could be charged nei- "ther on the *Egyptians*, nor any other hea- "then nation, and which ſurpaſſed the moſt "extravagant of theirs; and this was, that the "Supreme Being is repreſented as having taken "upon him a name which was a very magnifi- "cent one indeed, and ſuch as might denote

* Vol. III. p. 304.

LETTER XII. "the Supreme Being, but ſtill a name by which "he might be diſtinguiſhed as the tutelary God "of one family firſt, and then of one nation "particularly, and almoſt excluſively of all "others*." But there is no paſſage where he puſhes this objection more ſtrongly than in p. 463. of Vol. IV. where he obſerves, that "the eternal and infinite Being is repreſented "in the *Jewiſh* hiſtories, and in the whole ſy-"ſtem of their religion, as a local tutelar Deity, "carried about in a trunk, or reſiding in a "temple; as an ally, who had entered into co-"venant with their fathers; as a king, who "had actually held the reins of their govern-"ment; and as an induſtrious magiſtrate, who "deſcended into all the particulars of religious "and civil adminiſtration, even into the moſt "minute and meaneſt. Thus were the *Jews* "accuſtomed to familiarize themſelves with the "Supreme Being, and to imagine that he fa-"miliarized with them, and to figure him to "themſelves receiving their ſacrifices, and liſten-"ing to their prayers, ſometimes at leaſt, as "groſly, as *Lucian* repreſents *Jupiter*." He ſeems to think the heathens were in the right, when they blamed the *Jews* for "bringing the "firſt and only God too near to man, and "making him an actor immediately and per-"ſonally as it were in the creation and govern-"ment of the world †." And he had before obſerved, that according to the Scripture, "the

* Vol IV. p. 34. † *Ib.* p. 463.

"correſpondence

" correſpondence between God and man was LETTER XII.
" often immediate, and even intimate and fa-
" miliar with his elect, and with ſuch purified
" ſouls as were prepared for it.——And that the
" whole tenor of the ſacred writings repre-
" ſented the Supreme Being in frequent confer-
" ences with his creatures, God covenanting
" and making bargains with man, and man
" with God; God holding the language of man,
" reaſoning, arguing, expoſtulating, in a very
" human manner, animated by human affecti-
" ons, and appealing to human knowlege *."

Before I enter on a particular diſcuſſion of what his Lordſhip hath here offered, it is proper to obſerve, that though in a paſſage juſt now cited, the *Jews* ſeem to be blamed for bringing the Supreme Being *too near to man*, and ſuppoſing him to be an *actor immediately, and as it were perſonally, in the government of the world*; yet he elſewhere finds fault with the heathen philoſophers for excluding the *Monad* or Supreme Unity from the creation and government of the world, and *baniſhing him almoſt intirely from the ſyſtem of his works*, whereby he *became in ſome ſort a non-entity, an abſtract or notional being* †. And he cenſures them for " imaging a divine monarchy, on a
" human plan, the adminiſtration of which was
" not carried on by the immediate agency of
" God himſelf, but mediately, as in terreſtial
" monarchies, by that of inferior agents, ac-

* Vol. IV. p. 155. † *Ib.* p. 466.

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"cording to the ranks and provinces allotted "them *." And to this notion he thinks a con- "ſiderable part of the heathen idolatry is to be aſcribed. It is hard to know what idea this writer would have us form of the divine government. On the one hand, he ſeems to think it a demeaning the majeſty of the Supreme Being to ſuppoſe him to *act immediately and perſonally as it were* in the government of the world: And on the other hand, he will not allow, that the divine adminiſtration is carried on *mediately* by the miniſtry of inferior agents. And if God does not govern the world, either by his own perſonal immediate agency, or by that of ſubordinate agents and inſtruments, it cannot eaſily be conceived in what ſenſe he can be ſaid to govern the world at all.

Indeed any one that impartially conſiders the ſeveral paſſages above-mentioned relating to the *Jewiſh* Scriptures, and many others of the like kind, which occur in Lord *Bolingbroke's* writings, and compares them with the ſcheme which he himſelf hath advanced, and of which an account was given in the ſeventh Letter, will be apt to think that the real original ground of his prejudices againſt the ſacred writings is this: That they every-where repreſent God as intereſting himſelf in the affairs of men, whereas he looks upon it to be unworthy of the divine majeſty to ſuppoſe that he now concerneth himſelf about them, or exerciſeth any care with reſpect

* Vol. IV. p. 73.

to

to the individuals of the human race. And LETTER XII. since he asserts, that "the most elevated of finite "intelligent beings are not a jot nearer to the "Supreme Intelligence than the lowest *," he must, upon his scheme, think it as unbecoming the majesty of God to exercise any special care towards the highest of angelical beings, or whatever inhabitants there may be in any part of this vast universe, as towards the individuals of mankind. This scheme is not only, as was shewn before, of a most pernicious tendency, and manifestly subversive of all religion, and the fear of God, but at the bottom argueth, notwithstanding all its glorious pretences, very dishonourable and unworthy conceptions of the Supreme Being. For either it supposeth him to be not present to the creatures he hath made, which is to deny the immensity of his essence, or that if he be present, he hath not a certain knowlege of them, and of their actions and affairs, and consequently is not omniscient: Though our author himself says, "it may be demon-"strated, that the All-perfect Being must be "omniscient, as well as self-existent †." Or that if he hath a perfect knowlege of the actions and affairs of his reasonable creatures, yet he is absolutely indifferent about them, whether they obey his laws or not, whether good or evil, virtue or vice, happiness or misery, prevail in the moral world. This must be owned to be very well suited to the character of an *Epicurean*

* Vol. IV. p. 183. † Vol. V. p. 36.

deity,

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deity, whoſe happineſs conſiſteth in an eternal indolence, and who is ſuppoſed to be of a nice and delicate conſtitution, unable to bear the noiſe, the clamours, and confuſion, of this lower world, but is no-way conſiſtent with the idea of the Infinitely-perfect Being. How much nobler is the idea that is given us of the Deity in the Holy Scriptures! Where he is repreſented as filling heaven and earth with his preſence, and exerciſing a conſtant inſpection over all his creatures, and all their actions, as diſpoſing and ordering all events, without diſtraction or confuſion, in ſuch a manner, as in the final iſſue of things to provide for the happineſs of thoſe that ſincerely obey him, and go on in the practice of righteouſneſs and virtue, and to manifeſt a juſt diſpleaſure againſt thoſe who obſtinately perſiſt in an impertinent courſe of vice and wickedneſs; and in a word, as governing the world, and all the orders of beings in it, with infinite wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and equity, and with the ſame almighty facility with which he created them! Such an idea of God is not only of the greateſt conſequence to the intereſts of religion and virtue in the world, but is infinitely more auguſt and noble in itſelf, and more conformable to the higheſt notions we can form of infinite perfection, than that which this writer would ſubſtitute in its ſtead.

I ſhall not add any thing here to what was offered in my ſeventh Letter, concerning a particular providence as extending even to the individuals

viduals of the human race. If providence doth not interpoſe in human affairs at all, it cannot be expected that God ſhould at any time communicate extraordinary diſcoveries and revelations of his will to mankind. But if, as hath been ſhewn, providence doth concern itſelf even for individuals, and for promoting human happineſs, in a way conſiſtent with moral agency, it is very reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that it may pleaſe God to make diſcoveries and revelations of his will, for promoting the knowlege and practice of religion and virtue in the world, and that he may communicate ſuch diſcoveries to particular perſons, or to larger communities, in ſuch a way as may beſt anſwer the intentions of his wiſe and holy providence, of which he muſt be allowed to be the propereſt judge. And if he ſeeth fit to make ſuch revelations of his will, they muſt be communicated in ſuch a manner as is accommodated to human underſtandings, and fitted to work upon human affections; and therefore if they be addreſſed to men in a way of *reaſoning*, *arguing*, and *expoſtulating*, it would be abſurd to make this an objection, as this writer ſeems to do, ſince there is nothing in this, but what is wiſely ſuited to the end we may ſuppoſe the Supreme Wiſdom and Goodneſs to have had in view in giving ſuch revelations. LETTER XII.

He repreſents it as altogether unworthy of the Supreme Being to ſuppoſe him to enter into covenant with man: And in order to

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to expoſe this, he is pleaſed to repreſent it under the mean idea of God's *making bargains with man, or man with God.* But if we conſider what is really intended by it, we ſhall find, that a covenant in this caſe is properly to be underſtood of a conditional promiſe, whereby bleſſings and benefits are promiſed on God's part, and duties required on ours: It is a law of God enjoining obedience, with a promiſe or promiſes annexed to it, by which God condeſcendeth to oblige himſelf to confer certain benefits upon his creatures, the ſubjects of his moral government, if they fulfil and obey the injunctions he hath laid upon them, and comply with the terms which he hath appointed. And conſidered in this view, it is ſo far from being a juſt objection againſt the ſacred writings, that it may be regarded as their great excellency, and what ſhould mightily recommend them to our eſteem, that God is there repreſented as dealing with man in a way of covenant; that is, in a way admirably ſuited to us as we are reaſonable creatures, moral agents. By this God doth not diveſt himſelf of his character and authority as our ſupreme univerſal Lord. He hath an undoubted right to give laws to his creatures, and lay what commands or injunctions upon them he ſeeth fit, in a way of abſolute ſovereignty, without bringing himſelf under any promiſes and engagements; but he condeſcendeth in his marvellous wiſdom and goodneſs to encourage and animate our obedience by expreſs promiſes and aſſur-

ances of his grace and favour; and we on our parts bring ourſelves under the moſt ſolemn engagements, which bind us more ſtrictly to our duty by our own expreſs conſent, than which no way of dealing with us can have a greater tendency to promote our comfort, and the intereſts of religion and virtue in the world. LETTER XII.

As to the particular covenant made with *Abraham*, and God's engaging as he loves to expreſs it, to be a *tutelary God* to him; this put into other words ſignifies no more than this, that it pleaſed God to grant to this excellent perſon expreſs promiſes of his ſpecial grace and favour upon condition of his faith and obedience; and particularly, that he promiſed to give the land of *Canaan* to his deſcendants, and that from him ſhould proceed that glorious perſon, who had been promiſed from the beginning, and who was actually to come into the world in the fulneſs of time, and in whom all the families of the earth were to be bleſſed. This covenant made with *Abraham* was not only proper, as it was a diſtinguiſhing mark of the divine favour and goodneſs to a perſon, who was an eminent example of piety and virtue, and the fame of whoſe excellent qualities is ſpread all over the Eaſt even to this day, but as it made a part of a glorious ſcheme which the divine wiſdom had in view, and which was to be accompliſhed in the fitteſt ſeaſon, and to be of extenſive benefit to mankind. So that this particular covenant

was

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was really intended in a ſubſerviency to the general good.

With regard to the covenant made with the people of *Iſrael* at *Horeb*, the deſign of it was to erect a ſacred polity, the fundamental article of which was the acknowlegement and adoration of the one true God, the Maker and Governor of the world, free from all idolatry and polytheiſm. This tranſaction was carried on with a majeſty and ſolemnity becoming the great Lord of the univerſe, and which tended to inſpire the profoundeſt veneration for him, and for the laws he was pleaſed to promulgate. And at the ſame time it was wiſely ordered, that the people ſhould bind themſelves by their own expreſs conſent, and ſolemn ſtipulation, to receive that conſtitution, and obey thoſe laws. The moral laws given to that people were excellent: The judicial laws juſt and equitable: The ceremonial laws were inſtituted for wiſe reaſons, ſome of which we are able to aſſign at this diſtance; and there is no doubt to be made, that if we were well acquainted with the circumſtances of that time and people, we ſhould be convinced of the great propriety of many of thoſe ceremonious injunctions, which now we are not able particularly to account for. Our author talks of the prieſt's *wearing a ridiculous cap and breaſt-plate, fringes, and bells*, and thinks it abſurd to ſuppoſe that *ſuch trifles as theſe were the inſtitutions of divine wiſdom* *.

* Vol. V. p. 98.

But

But it was wiſely ordered under that conſtitu- LETTER XII.
tion, that nothing relating to divine worſhip ſhould be left to their own invention. It was judged proper to give them rules deſcending even to minute particulars, and to confine them to thoſe rules, the more effectually to hinder them from deviating into endleſs ſuperſtitions. The particulars referred to contributed to promote order and decency in the externals of religious ſervice; nor was there any thing in the *Jewiſh* inſtituted rites abſurd, indecent, ridiculous, or impure, as were many of the rites in uſe among the Pagan nations.

As to God's being a tutelary Deity to the people of *Iſrael*, this, if ſtripped of the form of expreſſion which he has choſen in order to ridicule it, only ſignifies, that God was pleaſed to make ſpecial revelations and diſcoveries of his will to that people, and to give them holy and excellent laws, at the ſame time promiſing if they obeyed thoſe laws, to grant them his ſpecial protection, to honour them with great privileges and advantages, and to make them happy in the effects of his grace and favour; and threatening, if they proved obſtinate and diſobedient, to inflict upon them awful puniſhments, the tokens of his righteous diſpleaſure. And that there is any thing in this unbecoming the wiſe and righteous Lord and Governor of the world, ſuppoſing him to concern himſelf in human affairs, this writer has not proved, except confident aſſertions muſt paſs for proofs. And as to his

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being the King of *Iſrael*, this is not to be underſtood as if he did not ſtill continue to be the univerſal Sovereign and Lord of all mankind. He was never regarded as having diveſted himſelf of that character. No-where is his univerſal dominion, and governing providence, as extending to all his creatures, and eſpecially to the whole human race, more ſtrongly aſſerted, or more nobly deſcribed, than in the *Jewiſh* Scriptures. But it pleaſed him, for wiſe purpoſes, to erect a peculiar conſtitution among the people of *Iſrael*, according to which he condeſcended to be, in a ſpecial ſenſe, their King and Sovereign. And what we are to underſtand by it is properly this, That he gave them laws at the firſt eſtabliſhment of their polity, which were to be the rule of their ſtate, and by which they were to be governed; and upon their obſervance of which the preſervation of their national privileges depended; and that he raiſed up judges and governors, who were to rule them in his name, and as by his authority, and to be the leaders and generals of their armies, for delivering them from their enemies and oppreſſors: And he was pleaſed alſo to give them direction in matters of great and public moment, by the oracle of *Urim* and *Thummim*, which was by his appointment eſtabliſhed among them for that purpoſe. There was nothing in all this but what was wiſely ſuited to the nature and deſign of that particular conſtitution, and tended to confirm and eſtabliſh that people in the belief and

and adoration of the one true God, and to exhibit a glorious ſenſible proof of his governing providence among them. But the theocracy was never deſigned to ſuperſede the office and authority of the ordinary magiſtrates, as this writer ſeems to inſinuate, by telling us, that under that conſtitution God "acted as an induſtrious magiſtrate, who deſcended into all "the particulars of religious and civil adminiſtration, even into the moſt minute and "meaneſt." For though the laws were originally given by God, the execution of thoſe laws was ordinarily veſted in the magiſtrates appointed for that purpoſe, and choſen by the people in their ſeveral tribes. So they were in the days of *Moſes*, and under the judges, when the people were more properly and immediately under the adminiſtration of the theocracy. LETTER XII.

But it is farther urged, that God is repreſented in the *Jewiſh* Scriptures as a *local* Deity, *reſiding* and dwelling *in a temple*, or *carried about by the Levites in a wooden cheſt or trunk*. The author ſeems fond of this obſervation, for he has it over three or four times on different occaſions. But by this reflection he has expoſed himſelf rather than the *Jews*. That people, inſtructed by their Scriptures, had nobler notions of the Deity, than to be capable of imagining, that the Lord of the univerſe, who, they were taught to believe, made and governeth the world, and filleth heaven and earth, was ſhut up and confined in a wooden cheſt. It

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is true, that the more effectually to preſerve that people from idolatry, and to impreſs and affect their minds with a lively ſenſe of God's ſpecial preſence among them, there was one ſacred place appointed, the tabernacle firſt, and temple afterwards, which was peculiarly dedicated to his ſolemn worſhip and ſervice. There their moſt ſolemn acts of devotion were to be performed. And there was the ark or ſacred cheſt he ſpeaks of, in which were depoſited the tables of the original covenant between God and them: There alſo was a cloud of glory, the majeſtic ſymbol of God's immediate preſence. It cannot be reaſonably denied, that God may, if he thinks fit, give illuſtrious exhibitions of his divine preſence and majeſty by a viſible external glory and ſplendor, in certain places, or on certain occaſions. But it doth not follow, that he is therefore a limited Being, or that his eſſence is circumſcribed, or confined to that particular place, where it pleaſeth him thus peculiarly to manifeſt his ſpecial preſence. How far the *Iſraelites* were from forming ſuch mean notions of the Divinity as this writer is pleaſed to inſinuate, we have an authentic proof in the admirable prayer offered up by *Solomon* at the dedication of the temple, in the name and preſence of all the people; in which he addreſſeth himſelf to God in that noble manner: *But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee,*

thee, how much leſs this houſe which I have builded? 1 *Kings* viii. 27. See alſo *Iſ.* lxvi. 1. LETTER XII.

It has often given me great pleaſure to reflect upon what every one that impartially conſiders the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament muſt be ſenſible of, that the *Jews*, if they governed themſelves by their ſacred Writings, were inſtructed, in their ideas of God, to unite the moſt incomprehenſible greatneſs and majeſty, and the moſt marvellous grace and condeſcenſion: To regard him as filling heaven and earth with the immenſity of his preſence, and yet as vouchſafing to grant viſible tokens and ſymbols of his ſpecial preſence among them by his ark and temple: As humbling himſelf even in beholding the things that are done in heaven, and yet as regarding the things that are done in the earth. They acknowleged the glorious hoſts of angels as the attendants of the divine majeſty, the bleſſed miniſters of his power and wiſdom; but ſtill as infinitely inferior, and even *chargeable with folly* before him: And inſtead of erecting them into Deities, and adoring them as the heathens did, they called upon them to join with men in worſhipping and adoring the ſupreme univerſal Lord. They were ready to cry out with a devout admiration in the contemplation of God's unequalled dignity and glory, *Who in the heavens can be compared unto the Lord? What is man that thou art mindful of him?* But they did not under this pretence repreſent him as taking no notice of

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men, or their concernments. They conſidered him as infinitely raiſed above the higheſt of his creatures, yet not neglecting or deſpiſing the meaneſt: That *his name is exalted above all bleſſing and praiſe*, and yet he hath a gracious regard to our prayers and praiſes, if offered up from ſincere and upright hearts. Thus they were taught in Scripture to celebrate and adore his matchleſs grace and condeſcending goodneſs, without impairing the ſplendor and glory of his infinite majeſty. And accordingly in the patterns of devotion that are ſet before us in Scripture, we may obſerve the moſt adoring thoughts, the moſt ſublime conceptions, of God's unſearchable greatneſs, and ſupreme dominion, and ſpotleſs purity; and the moſt humbling ſenſe of human weakneſs, guilt, and unworthineſs, mixed with an ingenuous confidence in his infinite grace and ſovereign mercy.

Thus I have conſidered pretty largely that part of the objection, which chargeth the Scriptures with degrading the Deity to mean and unworthy offices and employments; and ſhall now take ſome notice of the other part of the charge, *viz.* That the Scriptures aſcribe to him bodily parts, and human paſſions and affections, and even thoſe of the worſt kind.

With reſpect to the former, he obſerveth, That the *Jewiſh* Scriptures aſcribe to God "not only "corporeal appearances, but corporeal action, "and all the inſtruments of it, eyes, ears, mouth, "hands,

" hands, and feet. —— And that they are apt in LETTER XII.
" many places to make thoſe who read them re-
" preſent the Supreme Being to themſelves like
" an old man looking out of the clouds *."
He ſays, " the literal ſignification of ſuch ex-
" preſſions is abominable." And he ridicules thoſe who throw what he calls *a flimſy allegorical veil* over them, as having *ſtolen it from the wardrobe of* Epicurus. But the ridicule lights upon himſelf, who I believe was the firſt man that would have thought of having recourſe to *Epicurus* to interpret the ſenſe of *Moſes*. There needs no more than common attention, and a comparing the Scripture with itſelf, to be convinced that it is incapable of the abſurd interpretation he would put upon thoſe paſſages. He obſerves indeed, that " images taken from
" corporeal ſubſtance, from corporeal action,
" and from the inſtruments of it, cannot give
" us notions in any degree proper of God's
" manner of being, nor of that divine uncon-
" ceivable energy in which the action of God
" conſiſts." Nor are thoſe expreſſions of hands, feet, eyes, and ears, when aſcribed to God in Scripture, deſigned to ſignify either the manner of his being, or of his divine energy, concerning which there are many noble expreſſions in the ſacred writings, which have an admirable ſublimity in them; but by an eaſy metaphor underſtood by all the world, hands ſignify power, eyes and ears ſignify knowlege. And whereas

* Vol. V. p. 520.

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he adds, that "they cannot exalt, they muſt de-"baſe our conceptions, and accuſtom the mind "inſenſibly to confound divine with human "ideas and notions, God with man." The anſwer is obvious, That ſufficient care is taken in the holy Scriptures to prevent this by furniſhing us with the moſt ſublime ideas of the Divinity, that can poſſibly enter into the human mind. God's incomprehenſible majeſty, his immenſe greatneſs, his almighty power, the infiniteneſs of his underſtanding, his omnipreſence, are frequently repreſented and deſcribed in ſo admirable a manner, as ſhews with the laſt degree of evidence, that the expreſſions which ſeem to aſcribe bodily parts and members to him cannot be underſtood in a groſs literal ſenſe. Our author himſelf, aſcribing motives to God, obſerves, that "we muſt ſpeak of God after "the manner of men *." And indeed we muſt either not ſpeak of God at all, or we muſt ſpeak of him in ways of expreſſion, originally derived from ſomething relating to our own bodies or minds. This writer elſewhere inſinuates, that we reſemble God no more in our ſouls than we do in our bodies; and that to ſay his intellect is like ours, is as bad as the anthropomorphites †. So that, according to him, expreſſions drawn from the faculties of the ſoul, are as improper as thoſe drawn from the members of the body. Thus under pretence of a profound veneration for the Deity, we muſt not

* Vol. V. p. 468. † *Ib.* p. 35.

ſpeak

ſpeak of God at all, as ſome of the antient philoſophers thought it unlawful to name him, or to worſhip him, except in ſilence. Yea, we muſt not ſo much as think of him; for our ideas of God fall no doubt infinitely ſhort of his real majeſty and glory, as well as our expreſſions. But it may be obſerved, that this forward cenſurer falls into that way of talking himſelf which he finds fault with in the holy Scriptures. He repreſents God as *ſpeaking to men* by the law of nature: He calls it the *voice of God*, and the *word of God*. He ſpeaks of the *hands of God* *, and of his *ſeeing* all things. And though he repreſents the aſcribing ideas to God as no leſs improper, and even profane, than the aſcribing hands and feet to him, yet on ſeveral occaſions he talks of the *divine ideas*. LETTER XII.

But he farther urges, that the Scriptures attribute to God human affections and paſſions, and even thoſe of the worſt kind: That "they imputе ſuch things to the divinity as would be a "diſgrace to humanity †:" That "the *Jewiſh* "ſyſtem contained ſuch inſtances of partiality "in love and hatred, of furious anger, and "unrelenting vengeance, in a long ſeries of arbitrary judgments, as no people on earth but "this would have aſcribed, I do not ſay to God, "but to the worſt of thoſe monſters, who are "ſuffered or ſent by God, for a ſhort time, to "puniſh the iniquities of men ‡," To the

* Vol. IV. p. 395. † Vol. III. p. 299.
‡ Vol. V. p. 515.

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ſame purpoſe he afterwards obſerves, that according to the repreſentations made in Scripture, God "loves with partiality, his mercy is "arbitrary, and depends on mere will——And "towards mankind his anger is often furious, "his hatred inveterate, his vengeance unrelenting: But when the wicked repent of their "ſins, he repents ſometimes of his ſeverity." And then he aſks, "What a deſcription is this "of the All-perfect Being?" But this deſcription is his own, and is founded upon a groſs miſrepreſentation of the true intention and deſign of the ſacred writings. As to loving with partiality, if by that be meant his favouring and diſtinguiſhing ſome with greater privileges and advantages, and giving them more valuable means of improvement than others; nothing can be more evident than that this has been often and ſtill is done in the courſe of his providence. Nor is this any more to be found fault with than his making different ſpecies of beings, ſome vaſtly tranſcending others in their faculties, and capacities for happineſs. He is the abſolute Lord and diſpenſer of his own gifts, and his goodneſs is that of a free and ſovereign Benefactor; and it would be the height of abſurdity and profaneneſs to pretend to tie him down to give to all men preciſely the ſame capacities, the ſame advantages and opportunities, and to limit him ſo that he ſhall not diſpenſe his gifts in ſuch meaſures and proportions as he thinks fit, nor ſhall have it in his power to do any thing for any one

one perſon or people, but what he does preciſely for every perſon and for all people. But if by *partiality* be meant partiality in judgment, and in the diſtribution of rewards and puniſhments, it is very unjuſt to charge the holy Scriptures as attributing ſuch partiality to the Supreme Being. There is nothing more ſtrongly and expreſly aſſerted there than that God *accepteth not the perſons of men*, and that he *judgeth without reſpect of perſons*. It is evident, not merely from a ſingle paſſage, but from the whole tenor of the ſacred writings, that the righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſs, that he extendeth his favour to all thoſe of the human race, of whatſoever family or nation, who ſincerely love and obey him, and go on in a courſe of real piety and virtue: That ſuch perſons alone can hope for an intereſt in his favour, and to obtain the divine acceptance and approbation: And that all wicked and preſumptuous ſinners of whatſoever nation or profeſſion, ſhall be expoſed to his juſt diſpleaſure. Nor are there any ſuch things aſcribed to God in Scripture as *arbitrary judgments*. And whereas this writer charges it as unworthy of God to repreſent him as *repenting of his ſeverity* when the wicked repent of their ſins; the thing really intended by this muſt be acknowleged to be agreeable to the beſt ideas we can form of his governing wiſdom, righteouſneſs, and goodneſs. For it only ſignifies, that when ſinners forſake their evil ways, God is graciouſly pleaſed to change the methods of his

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his dealings towards them, and is willing to receive them to his grace and favour. But in reality there is no change in the divine purpoſes or councils. The change that is wrought is in the mind and temper of the ſinner: God acts uniformly according to the ſtated rules of his adminiſtrations; and nothing has happened but what he perfectly foreknew. But repenting in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe, as it is a mark of human imperfection and mutability, is expreſly denied of God in the holy Scripture; where we are aſſured, that God *is not as the ſon of man that he ſhould repent.*

As to the expreſſions of anger, wrath, fury, hatred, vengeance, as aſcribed to God in the ſacred writings, it is a thing ſo obvious that it can ſcarce be miſtaken, that theſe are only ſtrong expreſſions deſigned to impreſs the hearts of men with a more lively ſenſe of God's righteous diſpleaſure againſt ſin and wickedneſs, and reſolution to puniſh it; which it is of the higheſt importance to mankind to conſider and believe. Any one that allows himſelf to conſider impartially, muſt be ſenſible, that ſuch ways of repreſenting things are abſolutely neceſſary in a revelation deſigned for common uſe; and that it is far more for the good of the world in general, and for promoting the intereſts of virtue, and reſtraining vice and wickedneſs, that men ſhould conceive of God as loving and taking pleaſure in the good and righteous, and as full of juſt reſentment againſt evil doers, than

as utterly unconcerned about the actions and af- LETTER XII.
fairs of men, or alike affected towards the righ-
teous and the wicked. Yea, the former notions are not only more useful, and of better influence, but more just and rational in themselves, and more worthy of the All-perfect Being. For what idea is this of God, to represent him as neither delighting in order and virtue, nor displeased with vice and wickedness, but solacing himself in an eternal indolence, and noway concerned about the good or ill behaviour, the happiness or misery of his reasonable creatures! A God destitute of all affections, or of any thing correspondent to them, would not be the most perfect Being. There are spiritual affections, which have nothing to do with body, and which as properly belong to spirits or minds, as intellect or will; and I can as easily suppose them destitute of the latter as of the former. Our affections indeed have usually a great mixture of bodily passions, and consequenly of imperfection. But there are affections of a nobler kind, and which we may conceive in pure spirits, yea, they cannot be conceived without them. Nor can we avoid ascribing some affections, or what is analogous or equivalent to them, to God, provided we remove from them all those imperfections and defects with which they are attended in us. A love of order, goodness, purity, virtue, and a just detestation of moral evil, is absolutely inseparable from

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from the idea of the Infinitely-perfect Being, the moſt wiſe and righteous Governor of the world.

I ſhall conclude my obſervations on this part of Lord *Bolingbroke's* book with a paſſage from an author, whom no man will ſuppoſe to have been prejudiced in favour of the Scriptures. It is Mr. *Anthony Collins*, in *an Eſſay* which he publiſhed in 1707. *concerning the uſe of reaſon in propoſitions, the evidence whereof depends upon human teſtimony.* After having obſerved, that "one uſe of reaſon in things which by the "teſtimony of men are ſuppoſed to come from "God, is to endeavour to find out ſuch a ſenſe "of a ſuppoſed divine revelation as is agreeable "to the diſcoveries of our reaſon, if the words "under any kind of conſtruction will bear it, "though at firſt view they may ſeem repugnant "to reaſon, and to one another;" he adds, "This is certainly a great piece of juſtice, and "what is due to words that upon the leaſt evi-"dence can be ſuppoſed to come from God, "eſpecially ſince expreſſions that do not lite-"rally quadrate with the maxims of reaſon and "philoſophy, are neceſſary to make a revela-"tion have any effect upon common people's "minds. For was not God to be repreſented "by expreſſions, which literally underſtood at-"tribute to him human paſſions and actions, "they who by their occupations in the world "are incapable of thoſe more juſt ideas which "men of thought know to belong to that Be-"ing,

" ing, would perhaps think him incapable of LETTER
" taking cognizance of their actions: And XII.
" therefore to make a revelation *uſeful* and
" *credible in itſelf*, it muſt conſiſt of words
" whoſe *literal* meaning is falſe, but whoſe *real*
" meaning is conſiſtent with the juſteſt notions
" of reaſon and philoſophy. And therefore
" we ought to examine whether the words un-
" der any conſtruction will bear a reaſonable
" ſenſe," p. 17, 18. Mr. *Collins* then applies this obſervation to the revelation which we acknowlege, and conſiders thoſe paſſages of Scripture where God is ſaid to *reſt*, *repent*, *be angry*, *&c.* It muſt be owned, that this gentleman judges much more reaſonably and equitably in this matter than Lord *Bolingbroke* has done.

This may ſuffice at preſent. In my next I ſhall conſider the other objections which his Lordſhip hath urged againſt the divine authority of the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, eſpecially of the *Moſaic* writings.

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Farther objections againſt the Moſaic *Writings and the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament conſidered. The laws of* Moſes *not contrary to the law of nature. This particularly ſhewn with regard to the command for exterminating the* Canaanites, *and the law for puniſhing thoſe among the* Iſraelites *that ſhould revolt to idolatry, with death. The law of* Moſes *not accountable for the fury of the zealots. The inſtances of* Phineas *and* Mattathias *conſidered. Inſociability not the firſt principle of the law of* Moſes, *nor did that law take the* Jews *out of all moral obligations to the reſt of mankind. There is nothing falſe or abſurd in the* Moſaical *account of the creation of the world, and the fall of man. Concerning the ſanctions of the law of* Moſes. *The not making expreſs mention of future rewards and puniſhments in that law, no argument againſt its divine original. Some other objections againſt the Scriptures obviated.*

SIR,

I Now proceed to another ſet of objections which are deſigned to ſhew that ſome of the laws of *Moſes* are abſolutely contrary to the law of

of nature, which is the law of God, and there- LETTER XIII.
fore cannot come from him. He inſtances particularly in the command for exterminating the *Canaanites*, and the law for puniſhing idolaters among the *Iſraelites* with death.—" In both * which, he ſays, it is impiouſly ſuppoſed, " againſt principles as ſelf-evident, as any of " thoſe neceſſary truths, which are ſuch of all " knowlege, that the Supreme Being commands " by one law what he forbids by another ‖." And that " he approved and commanded on par- " ticular occaſions the moſt abominable viola- " tions of the general laws of nature *." I ſhall conſider what he has offered with regard to each of theſe.

As to the command for exterminating the *Canaanites*, it is what he frequently inveighs againſt as the greateſt piece of injuſtice and cruelty that ever was committed †. And he has pronounced, that " the men who juſtify ſuch cruelties upon " any hypotheſis whatſoever, muſt have very ill " hearts as well as heads:" And that " he who " imputes them to the Supreme Being is worſe " than an atheiſt, though he paſs for a ſaint ‡." I ſhall venture however to examine what this rigid cenſurer has offered on this ſubject.

He firſt layeth it down as a principle, that " God " cannot command in particular what he for- " bids in general. He who has made benevo- " lence to all rational beings the fundamental

‖ Vol. V. p. 180. * *Ib.* p. 181. † See particularly Vol. III. p. 305. Vol. V. p. 99. 146. ‡ Vol. III. p 306.

" law

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* Vol. V. p. 99.

of *Moſes*. And in judging of the caſe, how far it is juſtifiable, we muſt take it in all its circumſtances as there repreſented. Our author himſelf ſuppoſes the miracles done among them, if really done, to be ſufficient to convince all mankind, not only at that time, but in all ſucceeding generations to the end of the world, of the divine authority of that law and conſtitution: And therefore ſufficient to convince the people of *Iſrael*. All therefore that remained was that they ſhould be ſatisfied of the truth of the facts, and of this they could not doubt, as they were done before their eyes. And the ſame books which give an account of the facts, give an account of the divine commiſſion to the *Iſraelites*, and the reaſons and ends of it. And whereas it is urged, that "the *Canaanites* were obnoxious to the divine vengeance in no other "reſpect than that which was common to them "with all the heathen nations, *viz.* their idolatry*:" This is not true according to the account given by *Moſes*, *Levit.* xviii. 24, 25. 27. whereby it appears, that it was not merely for their idolatry, but for their monſtrous vices and wickedneſs of all kinds, that they were ordered to be exterminated. And that never was there upon earth a more profligate and abandoned race of men. And ſuppoſing this to be true, and that God had determined to ſignalize his righteous vengeance againſt them in the ſevereſt manner, he might, without any pretence LETTER XIII.

* Vol. V. p. 184.

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for arraigning the juſtice of his proceedings, have conſumed them by fire from heaven, as he did part of them at *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, or have overwhelmed them with an inundation, or have ſwallowed them up by an earthquake, and thereby utterly deſtroyed that people, their little ones as well as the adult. Nor could it have been ſaid in ſuch a caſe, that this was contrary to the law of nature. But then it would not have been ſo apparent, that this calamity was inflicted in a way of puniſhment for their idolatry and deteſtable wickedneſs. It might have been poſſibly attributed to ſome natural cauſe, or have been regarded as an unaccountable and fortuitous event. But when they were ordered to be exterminated for their abominable crimes by an expreſs command of God, atteſted by a ſeries of the moſt amazing miracles and divine interpoſitions; and this appointed to be executed by another nation, who were peculiarly ſet apart by their original conſtitution to the acknowlegement and adoration of the one true God, and of him only, and to whom God had given the moſt holy and excellent laws; at the ſame time threatening them with the like puniſhments if they committed the like crimes: In this caſe the reaſon of the judgment was as apparent, as when a malefactor is put to death by an officer of juſtice for a crime, in execution of the ſentence of a juſt magiſtrate. Nor is there any thing in ſuch a procedure, that can be proved to be inconſiſtent with the wiſdom and righteouſneſs

reouſneſs of the Supreme Being, or contradictory to his own laws; ſince there is no law of nature that debars God from executing judgments on particular perſons, or guilty nations for their crimes and vices even to extermination, or from employing, if he thinks fit, one or more nations to execute his judgments upon others. Nor has this confident and aſſuming writer brought any proof that it is ſo. As to his comparing the invaſion of *Canaan* by the *Iſraelites*, and what they did there, to the cruelties exerciſed by the *Spaniards* in *America**, and to the ravages of the *Huns* under *Attila*, who, he ſays, were much more merciful than they †, there is this vaſt difference between the caſes, that the latter had no motive or pretence, but their own ambition, avarice, and cruelty, whereas the former did it in execution of the expreſs command of God, and by a commiſſion from him, the truth of which was confirmed by a ſeries of the moſt extraordinary divine atteſtations that ever the world ſaw. This therefore can be no precedent to any other nation to do the like, except they can produce the ſame or equal proofs of a divine commiſſion; which no other ſince have been able to do, and probably never will. This may ſuffice with regard to the command for the extermination of the *Canaanites*: Which I have elſewhere conſidered more largely. See *Anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*,

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* Vol. III. p. 305. † Vol. V. p. 148.

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Vol. II. p. 429. p. 437. And the *Anſwer to Morgan*, Vol. II. p. 97, *et ſeq.*

The other command produced by this author to prove that the law of *Moſes* is contrary to the law of nature, and therefore cannot be of divine original, is the law for putting a falſe prophet to death that ſhould attempt to ſeduce the people to idolatry, and for the inflicting a capital puniſhment upon any particular perſon among the *Iſraelites* that ſhould revolt to idolatry, and even deſtroying a city that ſhould do ſo. Concerning this he very dogmatically pronounces—"I ſay, that the law of nature is "the law of God. Of this I have the ſame "demonſtrative knowlege that I have of the "exiſtence of God the All-perfect Being. I "ſay, that the All-perfect Being cannot con-"tradict himſelf: That he would contradict "himſelf, if the laws contained in the thir-"teenth chapter of *Deuteronomy* were his laws, "ſince they contradict thoſe of nature: And "therefore that they are not his laws. Of all "this I have as certain, as intuitive a knowlege, "as I have that two and two are equal to four, "or that the whole is bigger than a part †." A very ſhort and deciſive determination of the controverſy! But we are by this time too well acquainted with his Lordſhip's manner, to lay any great ſtreſs on his poſitive aſſertions, though delivered with the moſt aſſuming air.

† Vol. V. p. 191.

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The argument he makes uſe of here is the ſame that he had uſed before, *viz.* that the law of nature forbids murder. This will be eaſily allowed. But it is not inconſiſtent with that law which forbids murder, to put perſons to death, who are guilty of crimes that by the fundamental laws of the community deſerve death. If God ſhould have enacted a general law obligatory on all mankind, that whoſoever ſhould commit idolatry, or worſhip any other God, ſhould be put to death, as well as that any man that ſhould ſhed the blood of another without cauſe ſhould be put to death; this author might be challenged with all his confidence to prove, that ſuch a divine law would be contradictory to the law of nature. Idolatry by his own acknowlegement is forbidden in the law of nature, and is a breach of the firſt and great article of that law; and he repreſents it as *one of the greateſt of crimes* *." But God has not thought fit to enact a general law obligatory on all mankind for puniſhing idolaters with death, and without his appointment it ought not to be executed. But when it pleaſed him for wiſe ends to ſelect a particular nation, and among them to erect a peculiar ſacred polity, and to appoint that the adoration of the one true God and of him only, ſhould be the very baſis of their conſtitution, on which all their privileges, their national properties, and their right to their country depended, it is evident that un-

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* Vol. V. p. 195.

LETTER XIII. der such a constitution to revolt to idolatry and polytheism, was in the most criminal sense to be traitors to the community: And to arraign a law for inflicting a capital punishment upon idolaters under that particular constitution, is highly absurd. Nor could any thing be more just in such a case, than to order that a false prophet, who should endeavour to seduce the people to idolatry, should be put to death: Though this writer objects against it as unjust for this strange reason, that "miracles were daily and "almost hourly wrought in the sight of all "*Israel**." This is absolutely false, if understood of miracles strictly so called; or if it were true, it is an odd thing, to urge that which made the crime of the false prophet the greater, to be a reason for exempting him from punishment.

"But what he chiefly finds fault with is the law for destroying any *Israelitish* city, that should fall off to the worship of idols, *Deut.* xiii. 13, 14, 15, 16. He urges, that "the innocent "were to be involved in the same punishment "with the guilty; neither man, nor woman, "nor beast, neither the brother, the daughter, "the wife, nor the friend was to be spared: "And that the whole chapter is such an edict "as could not be imputed to *Attila* without "injustice."——And after exclaiming against the obstinacy of those that pretend to justify the law of *Moses* in this instance, he observes, that

* Vol. V. p. 183.

"by

" by that law, the undiſtinguiſhing extermina- LETTER
" tion of collective bodies, and eſpecially for XIII.
" matters of opinion, is allowed*." And afterwards, arguing againſt Mr. *Locke*, he adds, that " even ſuppoſing God to be their King, the " objections of injuſtice and cruelty in thoſe " laws will remain in their full force: And that " to ſuppoſe him to have given theſe laws " would be to degrade the All-perfect Being to " the character of an unjuſt and cruel tyrant, " who authorized and even commanded his mi- " niſters expreſly, to puniſh without meaſure, " without diſcernment, and without forms of " juſtice†." And he inſinuates, that there are precepts in that chapter " from which the in- " quiſition copied the inſtructions ſhe gives to " her familiars§." But this is a groſs miſrepreſentation. He himſelf elſewhere obſerves, that " the cruel principle of perſecution for opi- " nions was never known, till Chriſtians in- " troduced it into the world‡;" though contrary, as he owns, to the true ſpirit of the Goſpel. And it is manifeſt that the puniſhments referred to *Deut.* xiii. were not to be inflicted for matters of opinion but of practice, for open acts of idolatry in ſubverſion of the fundamental conſtitution of their ſtate. And great care was to be taken, that the puniſhment ſhould not be executed without due inquiry, and full proof. They were to *inquire*, and *make ſearch*, and

* Vol. V. p. 184. † *Ib.* p. 194. § *Ib.* p. 183. ‡ *Ib.* p. 315.

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ask diligently, ſo as to be aſſured that it was *truth*, and the *thing certain*. Great deliberation was to be uſed: And except the whole city was obſtinately addicted to idolatry, and determined to perſiſt in it, they were not to be exterminated. And conſidering the deſign and nature of that peculiar conſtitution, a decree or law for exterminating a city among themſelves that ſhould revolt to the worſhip of falſe Gods, ſeemed neceſſary, and was like the cutting off a corrupt or gangrened limb, which was requiſite to ſave the whole. If God had at the original eſtabliſhment of that polity, declared that he himſelf would in an immediate way by peſtilence, or fire from heaven, or ſome other extraordinary judgment, exterminate or deſtroy any city among them, that ſhould revolt to the worſhip of idols, it could not be pretended that this would have been unjuſt, though children as well as adult would be involved in it. But he choſe that the puniſhment ſhould be inflicted in a judicial way by the hands of the magiſtrates, and by the authority of the nation or whole community, purſuant to a law for that purpoſe. And the puniſhment was both ordered to be executed with great ſolemnity, and to be attended with circumſtances of peculiar ſeverity, ſo as to proceed to utter extermination, the more effectually to create an horror and deteſtation of the crime, and to ſhew that ſo wicked a race was to be entirely deſtroyed. To which, it muſt be added, that this puniſhment was denounced

nounced in conſequence of the original contract or covenant between God and that people. By coming into that covenant for themſelves and their children, they voluntarily ſubjected themſelves and them to the ſevereſt penalties in caſe of a revolt. And conſidering the mighty advantages they had as a nation by the theocracy, and by their peculiar conſtitution, and the ſignal bleſſings that would have followed upon their obedience, it was a condition which could not be reaſonably objected againſt, ſince they might ſo eaſily avoid the threatened calamities, by obedience to a law ſo juſt and agreeable to reaſon, as is that of the worſhip of the one true God, the Lord of the univerſe, and of him only. And to have legally tolerated any among them, whether particular perſons or communities, that ſhould openly revolt to idolatry, would have been manifeſtly abſurd, and abſolutely ſubverſive of their whole polity.

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This writer takes particular notice of "the "right the zealots aſſumed to aſſaſſinate any "*Jew*, that ſhould ſeem to them to violate by "public and ſtrong appearances the ſanctity of "the divinity, of the temple, and of the na"tion: And that this produced ſuch ſcenes of "horror among the *Jews*, as no other nation "ever produced." It will be owned, that the zealots in the latter times of the *Jewiſh* ſtate carried this to an exceſs of madneſs and fury; but the law is not accountable for it. It is evident from the thirteenth chapter of *Deuteronomy*, which

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which orders the punishment of those that should revolt to idolatry, that the whole was to be transacted in an orderly and legal way, with great deliberation, and by public authority. And the same thing is repeated *Deut.* xvii. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. where it is ordained, that with regard to any particular person that had served other Gods, they should before they punished him *enquire* and *search diligently*. And it is expresly appointed, that at *the mouth of two or three witnesses* he should be put to death, but that *at the mouth of one witness* he should not be put to death. Nor does Lord *Bolingbroke* pretend to produce any law to authorize the madness of the zealots. He only mentions two instances, which, he thinks, countenanced it, *viz.* that of *Phineas*, and that of *Matthias*. As to the former, he says, "*Phineas* murdered *Zimri* and *Cosbi* "in the act of fornication." But this was not a simple act of fornication. It was joined with avowed idolatry, and, as it was circumstanced, was a most insolent defiance of all law and authority, one of the most flagrant crimes, in open opposition to God and Man, that could be committed. The person who inflicted the punishment was himself a chief magistrate, of high authority, and in a case which needed no proof, and admitted of no delay, when a plague from God was broke out among the people on the account of that very crime which these persons so impudently avowed: And it was also in consequence of an order which *Moses* had given by

the command of God to the judges of *Iſrael* to LETTER XIII.
ſlay thoſe that were joined to *Baal Peor*. *Numbers* xxv. 4, 5. So that *Phineas* had full legal authority for what he did. And therefore this was no warrant to thoſe who without any authority aſſaſſinated any man they thought fit under pretence of his violating the law, of which they ſet up themſelves for judges: As to the inſtance of *Matthias*, our author obſerves, that "in the fury of his holy zeal he ruſhed on the "*Jew* that was about to ſacrifice in obedience "to the edict of *Antiochus*, and on the officer "appointed to take care of the execution of the "edict, and murdered them both *." That we may judge of this, it is to be conſidered, that never was there a greater tyrant than *Antiochus*. He had entirely ſubverted the whole *Jewiſh* conſtitution, aboliſhed the antient laws, and maſſacred the people. If ever there was a juſt foundation for riſing up in defence of religion, law and liberty, here was an occaſion that loudly called for it. In theſe circumſtances *Matthias*, who was not a mere private perſon, but *a ruler, and a great and honourable man* in the city of *Modin* where he dwelt, ſlew a *Jew*, who was then openly committing a crime, for which by the fundamental laws of his country he ought to have ſuffered death, but at a time when no legal juſtice in the uſual forms could be had. He alſo killed the King's officer, who was then compelling the people to ſubvert the laws. This

* Vol. V. p. 180.

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he deſigned as a ſignal to the inſurrection which he immediately begun, an inſurrection fully juſtifiable if ever any was ſo, and which was carried on with a noble ſpirit and fortitude, and with a ſucceſs that ended in the ſubverſion of the horrid tyranny, and the happy reſtoration of their liberties and laws. Such an action, ſo circumſtanced as that of *Matthias*, if it had been performed by a *Greek* or *Roman*, in oppoſition to horrid bare-fac'd tyranny and cruelty, and in vindication of the eſſential laws and liberties of his country, would have been highly celebrated, and tranſmitted to all ſucceeding ages as a moſt glorious act of heroiſm.

The only thing farther that I ſhall mention is what he obſerves concerning "the maſſacre "which the *Levites* made of three thouſand "men in one day, when they were commanded, "without any other form of proceeding, to "take every man his ſword, and to ſlay his "neighbour*." This muſt be owned to be an extraordinary puniſhment, and the occaſion was extraordinary. The revolt of the people was the moſt inexcuſable, by this writer's own acknowlegement, that could be ſuppoſed. It happened, when the law had been juſt promulgated with the moſt amazing ſolemnity, and the conſtitution eſtabliſhed, to which they had given their own conſent. The body of the people had thereby expoſed themſelves to deſtruction. And if they had been conſumed in an imme-

* Vol. V. p. 146.

diate

diate way by a plague, or fire, or ſome extra- LETTER
ordinary judgment from heaven, it was no XIII.
more than they deſerved. It was neceſſary that ſo open, ſo public, ſo aggravated a revolt, and inſurrection againſt the majeſty and authority of the ſupreme univerſal Lord, to whom they themſelves had ſo lately in the moſt ſolemn manner vowed ſubjection and obedience, ſhould be diſtinguiſhed with marks of great ſeverity. In caſes of crimes where great numbers have been concerned, it has ſometimes been thought juſt to decimate them, to make one in ten ſuffer the death they all deſerved. But here of above ſix hundred thouſand three thouſand only ſuffered, not above the two hundredth part of the whole. The numbers that were concerned rendered the trying each of them in a formal proceſs, which is what he ſeems to require, impracticable. Nor was there any need of it. The fact was public and notorious: And the perſons that ſuffered were undoubtedly ſuch as were known to be moſt guilty, and to have been moſt active in promoting the defection and revolt. And the immediate puniſhment of theſe was the moſt ſpeedy way of quelling the inſurrection, and bringing the whole body to a ſenſe of their guilt and of their duty.

The third objection I propoſed to take notice of as raiſed by this writer againſt the *Moſaic* œconomy is this. That "the firſt prin-
"ciples, and the whole tenor of the *Jewiſh*
"laws, took that people out of all moral ob-
"ligations

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" ligations to the reſt of mankind——That they
" were taught to think themſelves a choſen
" race diſtinct from the reſt of mankind, and
" who were far from owing to other men, what
" other men owed to them, and to one ano-
" ther. This produced a legal injuſtice and
" cruelty in their whole conduct, authorized
" by their law, and preſſed upon them by their
" prieſts and prophets *."." And he elſewhere obſerves, that "the firſt principle of their po-
" lity, eccleſiaſtical and civil, was inſociability:
" And accordingly their manners were rendered
" unſuitable to the common nature and genius
" of mankind †."

This is a heavy charge, but if cloſely examined, this inſociability amounteth to no more than this. That they had not a community of religion and rites with the heathens, as the heathens had with one another, and which they could not have without abſolutely deſtroying, and defeating the end of their moſt excellent conſtitution: That they were not to intermarry with idolaters, and were obliged to keep cloſe to the obſervation of their own peculiar laws and cuſtoms; ſeveral of which were deſigned to preſerve them as a diſtinct body from mixing and incorporating with other nations. And conſidering how different their conſtitution was from that which obtained in other countries: That all the world about them was immerſed in

* Vol. III. p. 290. See alſo *ib.* p. 283. † Vol. V. p. 148. See alſo *ib.* p. 198.

idolatry

idolatry and polytheiſm, and that they themſelves were very apt to fall in with the idolatrous cuſtoms of the neighbouring nations, and to which mankind in all ages have been very prone: Conſidering theſe things, if great care had not been taken to keep them diſtinct by ſeveral peculiar rites and cuſtoms, and to hinder them from intermarrying with their idolatrous neighbours, they could not poſſibly have preſerved their conſtitution: They muſt have been ſoon mixed and confounded with other nations: The conſequence of which would have been, that they would have fallen into a conformity to their religion and worſhip, and have loſt their own. And ſo the whole deſign of that admirable polity, ſo well fitted to preſerve the knowlege and worſhip of the one true God, and of him only, in oppoſition to the univerſally prevailing polytheiſm and idolatry, would have been defeated: And all nations would have been involved in the ſame common idolatry, and perhaps have continued in it to this day. For, according to the plan laid by the divine wiſdom, *Judaiſm* prepared the way for Chriſtianity: And all that is good in *Mahometaniſm* is derived from the one or the other of theſe. But though the people of *Iſrael* were obliged thus to keep themſelves diſtinct, and though none were regarded as ſtrictly and properly incorporated into their body, who did not conform to the peculiar laws of their polity, they were not obliged to confine their benevolence to thoſe of

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LETTER XIII. of their own nation. They were directed by many expreſs precepts in their law to ſhew great kindneſs to thoſe of other nations, to the ſtrangers that paſſed through their land, or that ſojourned among them: To exerciſe great humanity towards them, and ſerve them in all friendly offices: This is not only allowed, but ſtrongly preſſed upon them in their law, as any one will be convinced, that impartially conſiders the paſſages referred to at the bottom of the page *. And the *Jews* themſelves obſerve that the precepts preſcribing a kind conduct towards ſtrangers, are inculcated one and twenty times in the law.

It is mere calumny and abuſe to ſay, that the *Jews* were authorized by their law, and preſſed by their prophets, to exerciſe cruelty and injuſtice towards the reſt of mankind; and that they were abſolved from all moral obligations, and from all rules of juſtice, equity, and fidelity with regard to them. Nor was there any thing in their law to oblige them to perſecute others for their opinions in religion, or to compel them to conform to their peculiar rites. On the contrary, they allowed thoſe of any other nation to dwell among them, and to worſhip at the temple where there was a court provided for them, who worſhipped the one true God the maker and preſerver of all things, though they did not obſerve the rites which were pe-

* Lev. xix. 24. xxv. 35. Numb. xxvi. 11. Deut. x. 17, 18, 19. xxiv. 19, 20, 21, 22.

culiarly

culiarly prescribed to those of their own body. And how happy would it have been, if the principles of toleration had been always carried thus far among those of other professions! LETTER XIII.

Their looking upon themselves to be God's chosen people, ought to have engaged them to great thankfulness to God for such eminent advantages, and to have put them upon distinguishing themselves by the pure practice of religion and every virtue, that they might walk worthy of their character and privileges: If they abused this to pride and insolence, the fault was not in their law, but in themselves. Mankind have been always too prone to abuse their real or supposed advantages. The *Greeks* regarded the rest of the world as *barbarians*. And *Socrates* is introduced by *Plato* in his fifth book of laws, as directing the *Greeks* to regard the *barbarians* as *by nature* their *enemies*, and as prescribing a conduct towards them, which is little reconcilable to the common rules of humanity. Christians cannot but look upon it as their great advantage that they are distinguished from many other nations which are sunk in the grossest ignorance and barbarism. And it would argue the most inexcusable stupidity and ingratitude, not to be very thankful to providence on this account. But this is no just reason for treating those nations with contempt and cruelty.

The fourth objection which was mentioned was, that there are several passages in the Scriptures, which are false, absurd, and unphiloso-

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phical. And he particularly inſtances in the account there given of the creation of the world, and the fall of man.

With reſpect to the former, he ſays, "It is "impoſſible to read what *Moſes* writ on that "ſubject, without feeling contempt for him as "a philoſopher, and horror as a divine. For "he is to be conſidered under both theſe cha-"racters ‖." And he takes upon him to pronounce, that "we cannot admit *Moſes*'s teſti-"mony concerning the beginning of the world "for divine, without abſurdity and blaſphe-"my *."

There cannot in my opinion be a greater inſtance of the moſt unreaſonable prejudice, than the objections that have been raiſed againſt the authority of *Moſes* from the account he gives of the creation. Whoſoever will take the pains impartially to compare it with the accounts left us in the traditions of the moſt antient nations, concerning which the reader may ſee the introduction to the *Univerſal Hiſtory*, relating to the *Coſmogony, or the creation of the world*, will find the account given by *Moſes* ſo vaſtly ſuperior, as will naturally lead him to regard it as of an higher original. There is a majeſty and ſublimity, as well as ſimplicity and plainneſs in it, which hath greatly recommended it to the beſt judges. Nothing could be ſo proper to anſwer the deſign he had in view, as to begin his book with an account of the creation of the

‖ Vol. III. p. 231. 283. * *Ib.* p. 308.

world.

world. If he had merely aſſerted in general, that God created the world, and all things that are therein, this would not have made ſuch an impreſſion upon the people, as was proper and neceſſary in a matter of ſuch vaſt importance, and which, according to the author's own obſervation, "leads to the acknowlegement of "the Supreme Being, by a proof levelled to "the meaneſt underſtanding ‖." And therefore it was proper to give them more diſtinct notions of the formation of things by the divine power and wiſdom. Accordingly he diſtinctly mentions the light, the firmament, the ſun, the moon, and ſtars, the earth, the ſea, the mountains, the plants and vegetable products of the earth, the various kinds of animals, and laſtly, man himſelf. And aſſures them, that theſe various appearances were not owing to a variety of cauſes, which, according to Lord *Bolingbroke*, the firſt men in the rude uncultivated ages would be naturally led to believe, but were all owing to one and the ſame glorious original cauſe and author. It is evident, that what was principally deſigned was to give an account of the formation of our ſyſtem, as far as relates particularly to our earth: At the ſame time aſſuring them, that the ſun, moon, and ſtars, all the heavenly bodies, which the nations were apt to adore, were created by God. The whole is repreſented as having been effected with an Almighty facility. That God only ſpoke or com-

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‖ Vol. III. p. 253.

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manded, and it was done. All things were created by the word of his power, which tends to give a noble idea of the power and majeſty of the great Creator. Yet this great work, according to *Moſes*, was carried on in an orderly progreſſive way. There is a general account given of the viſible and ſucceſſive changes wrought each day upon the face of the earth, till it was completed. But our author who is determined on every ſuppoſition to find fault with the *Moſaic* account, blames *Moſes* for repreſenting the ſolar ſyſtem, or even this our planet, as having been the work of ſix days. He thinks "ſuch precipitation ſeems repugnant to "that general order of nature, which God eſta-"bliſhed, and which he obſerves in his "productions‖." As if the firſt formation of things muſt neceſſarily have been carried on in the ſlow way, which is now obſerved after the order and courſe of nature is once eſtabliſhed. It is perfectly agreeable to reaſon to believe, that the firſt formation of the world, and the ſeveral ſpecies of things in it, did not take up a long ſpace of time: And yet there is no reaſon to think that it was all perfected in an inſtant, without any intervals, though it would have been eaſy to the divine power to have done ſo. And this writer, who ſeems here to think the creation as repreſented by *Moſes* to have been too much precipitated, and accompliſhed in too ſhort a time, ſeems elſewhere to think that it was too

‖ Vol. III. p. 233.

ſlowly

ſlowly carried on. For he ſays, " we muſt not " conceive the world to have been made by a " laborious progreſſion——God willed it to " exiſt, and it exiſted *."

As to the particular order in which the creation was carried on according to the account given by *Moſes*; this writer with all his confidence has not been able to prove that there is any thing in it inconſiſtent with reaſon or with true philoſophy: Though he has paſſed a ſevere cenſure on thoſe who have endeavoured to " re- " concile the *Moſaic* account to reaſon and na- " ture, and to wreſt natural philoſophy into an " agreement with it †." He inſtances in *Moſes*'s ſaying, that " light was created, and the diſtin- " ction of night and day, of evening and morn- " ing was made, before the ſun, the moon, and " the ſtars ‡." But we know ſo little of the real nature of light, that no man can pretend poſitively to determine that it could not have made its appearance before the ſun and moon and planets were completed in their preſent form and order. As it ſeems to be the nobleſt ſubſtance in the material world, it is reaſonable to believe that at the firſt formation of things, it was firſt created, or at leaſt ſeparated from the chaotic maſs, and put in motion, ſo as to make a diſtinction between light and darkneſs, and ſome kind of ſucceſſion and viciſſitude of the one and the other, anſwering to day and night, evening and morning: Though it is evident

* Vol. IV. p. 111. † *Ib.* p. 181. ‡ Vol. III. p. 301.

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from the account given of the work of the fourth day, that it was not till then that the ſun, moon, and ſtars were rendered conſpicuous to the earth, and the order and courſe of things fully ſettled, ſo as to cauſe the proper diſtinction of times and ſeaſons, days, months, years; for which reaſon no notice is taken of the formation of thoſe heavenly bodies till that day. It is to little purpoſe to ſay, as his Lordſhip has done, that "*Moſes* "was as ignorant of the true ſyſtem of the uni- "verſe as any of the people of his age." This is more than he can prove. But if it were ſo, it was not neceſſary, ſuppoſing him inſpired as a prophet or a law-giver, that he ſhould be inſpired alſo with a knowlege of the true ſyſtem of philoſophy and aſtronomy. Or, if he had been ever ſo well acquainted with it, it would have been altogether improper to have given an exactly philoſophical account of the creation: Nor could any ſuch account of it have been given, conſidering the different ſyſtems of philoſophy that have obtained, but what would have been as much found fault with, and perhaps more, than that which he has given. The truth is, ſuch an account would have been no way accommodated to the capacities of the people: It would have perplexed and confounded inſtead of inſtructing them. It was proper for many reaſons that the account ſhould be drawn up in a popular way, and yet in a way that is at the bottom agreeable to the real truth of things. So the moon is very fitly called a *great light*, and

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it may be truly called ſo, becauſe it yields great light to us, though ſtrictly and philoſophically ſpeaking it has no light of its own at all. And now after all our improvements in philoſophy and aſtronomy, we ſtill ſpeak of the light of the moon, of the ſun's motion, riſing and ſetting —And the man that in a moral or theological, or in an hiſtorical diſcourſe, would uſe a different language, would only render himſelf ridiculous. LETTER XIII.

Lord *Bolingbroke* farther objects, that though *Moſes* aſcribes the creation to God, "yet when "God proceeds to the creation of man, he calls "in other beings to co-operate with him, and "make man in his and their image. This ſeems "to lay a foundation for polytheiſm, which is "inconſiſtent with that unity of God which my "reaſon ſhews me, and which the general tenor "even of the *Moſaic* hiſtory atteſts*." And ſince by his own acknowlegement the general tenor of the *Moſaic* writings leads us to aſſert the unity of God, this plainly ſhews that the paſſage he refers to was not deſigned to infer polytheiſm. And if there be ſomething unuſual in the manner of expreſſion, it muſt be interpreted in a conſiſtency with the whole *Moſaic* law; nor can it be ſuppoſed that *Moſes* intended it otherwiſe. And this plainly appears from the very paſſage itſelf conſidered in its connection. For after having told us, *Gen.* i. Ver. 26. that *God ſaid, Let us make man in our image, after*

* Vol. III. p. 300.

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our likeneſs: He adds, Ver. 27. *And God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him*: Where it is plain, that what is expreſſed plurally in one verſe is ſingular in the other: And that the deſign of thoſe expreſſions, *Let us make man in our image*, was not to ſignify that other beings joined with God in the formation of man, and in making him in their as well as God's image; ſince it is expreſly declared in the words immediately following, that *God created man in his own image*, and for the greater emphaſis, and as it were on purpoſe to prevent ſuch a conſtruction, it is again repeated, *in the image of God created he him.* I would obſerve by the way, how much nobler the account is, that is given by *Moſes* of the formation of man, than that which was given by the antient *Egyptians*, of whoſe wiſdom and philoſophy our author ſpeaks in ſuch high terms, and from whom he would have us believe *Moſes* derived all his wiſdom and knowlege. They taught, as he obſerves from *Diodorus Siculus*, that "the firſt of human kind were quickened "into life by the ſun, and were animated ſy-"ſtems of mud." And he thinks, that "if "we are perſuaded that this world had a begin-"ning in time, we muſt of neceſſity aſſume, "that the firſt man and the firſt woman, or that "one man and one woman at leaſt, were pro-"duced in full ſtrength and vigour of body "and mind ‡." This is agreeable to the *Ma-*

‡ Vol. V. p. 167, 168.

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ſaic account, which is perfectly conſiſtent with reaſon, though there is no great likelihood, that reaſon alone could have aſſured us of it. For as his Lordſhip there obſerves, "how men came "into the world, reaſon will tell us no better "than hiſtory or tradition does." This therefore is a proper ſubject of divine revelation. LETTER XIII.

It argues a ſtrange diſpoſition to find fault, to lay ſuch a ſtreſs as Lord *Bolingbroke* has done, upon that particular manner of expreſſion *Moſes* makes uſe of, that God *reſted the ſeventh day from all his work*, as if it were alone ſufficient to deſtroy the authority of the *Moſaic* writings. No man that impartially conſiders the noble account there given of the creation, that God is repreſented as having only ſpoke and it was done, can reaſonably imagine that the deſign of thoſe expreſſions was to ſignify that God was *wearied with the laborious work of creation*, as our author expreſſes it, and needed reſt after it, as men do, who are tired with their work. *Haſt thou not known*, ſaith the Prophet *Iſaiah*, *haſt thou not heard, that the everlaſting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? Iſaiah* xl. 28. All therefore that can be underſtood by that manner of expreſſion is only this, that God had then finiſhed the work of the creation, and had a divine complacency in it.

As to the *Moſaic* account of the fall of man, it is what his Lordſhip has frequently endeavoured to expoſe. And it has been a conſtant

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ſubject of ridicule to the Deiſtical Writers in every age. But if it be candidly and impartially examined, as it ſtands connected with the account given by *Moſes* of man's original dignity, it will appear to be of great importance, and to furniſh inſtructions of excellent uſe.

The account given by *Moſes* of the ſtate in which man was at firſt created is ſhort, but ſuch as tends to give a noble idea of his dignity; as having been created in the image of God, in a ſtate of purity and innocence, and inveſted with a dominion over all the other creatures in this lower world. His Lordſhip in a paſſage cited above ſays, that "ſuppoſing the world to have "had a beginning in time, we muſt of neceſ- "ſity aſſume, that the firſt man and the firſt "woman, or that one man and one woman at "leaſt, were produced in full ſtrength and vi- "gour of body and mind." And indeed man cannot reaſonably be ſuppoſed to have been at firſt created in a ſtate of infancy, for then he muſt ſoon have periſhed. He was therefore formed in a ſtate of maturity, as were the other animals, and undoubtedly in a ſound and happy conſtitution of body, and it is equally reaſonable to ſuppoſe that he was created in an anſwerable perfection of mind. And that conſequently there was in man at his firſt creation, a perfect harmony and juſt balance in the ſeveral faculties of his nature, that his intellectual and moral powers were ſound and clear, and uncorrupt, his appetites and paſſions in a ſtate of juſt ſubjection

jection to reaſon and the law of the mind, and his affections rightly diſpoſed. Here then is a ſtate of moral rectitude, in which according to all the dictates of reaſon and good ſenſe man muſt be ſuppoſed to have been created. Nor can any thing be more abſurd, than to ſuppoſe that this noble creature, who was conſtituted lord of this inferior creation, the crown and ornament of God's works here below, made his firſt appearance in the world, as a huge overgrown infant, in full vigour indeed and beauty of body, but a mere child in underſtanding, and with a ſoul utterly unfurniſhed. It is reaſonable to believe, that he that made him would not turn him out into the world abſolutely deſtitute of knowlege and ideas, but that he immediately endued him with ſo much knowlege of things, eſpecially of his Maker, of the creation of the world, and of his duty, as qualified him for anſwering the ends of his being. *Moſes* informs us, that great things were done for him by the beneficent Creator. That he was pleaſed in his great goodneſs to provide a peculiarly delightful ſeat for the entertainment of his innocent creature, a bliſsful paradiſe, where he was placed amidſt a profuſion of joys. And as there was none among the inferior animals, that were put under his dominion, with whom he could cultivate that ſociety and friendſhip for which his nature was formed, it pleaſed God to make another creature of his own kind, bone of his bone, and fleſh of his fleſh, adorned with all the charms

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of beauty and innocence, to whom he was to be united in the deareſt ties of love. And from them was to proceed a race of creatures of the ſame ſpecies.

In this ſtate man was undoubtedly obliged by the law of his creation to obey and adore his Creator and Sovereign Lord and Benefactor, and to yield a ready obedience to all his known commands. But though univerſal obedience was his duty, *Moſes* acquaints us that there was a particular command given him by way of trial. Nor was there any thing in this unbecoming the Supreme Wiſdom and Goodneſs. Since God was pleaſed to conſtitute him lord of this inferior creation, and had given him ſo large a grant, and ſo many advantages, it was manifeſtly proper in the nature of things, that he ſhould require ſome particular inſtance of homage and fealty, to put him in mind, that he was under the dominion of an higher Lord, on whom he depended, and to whom he owed an unreſerved ſubjection. And what properer inſtance could there be in the circumſtances man was then in, than his being obliged in obedience to the divine command to abſtain from one or more of the delicious fruits of paradiſe? It pleaſed God to inſiſt only upon his abſtaining from one, at the ſame time that he indulged him a full liberty as to all the reſt. And this ſerved both as an act of homage to the Supreme Lord, from whoſe bountiful grant he held paradiſe, and all its enjoyments, and it was alſo fitted to teach him a noble and uſeful leſſon of

of abſtinence and ſelf-denial, one of the moſt important bleſſings in a ſtate of probation, and alſo of unreſerved ſubmiſſion to God's authority and will, and an implicit reſignation to his ſovereign wiſdom and goodneſs. It tended to habituate him to keep his ſenſitive appetite in a perfect ſubjection to the law of reaſon, in which conſiſts the proper order and harmony of the human nature, and to take him off from too cloſe an attachment to ſenſible good, and alſo to keep his deſire after knowlege within juſt bounds, ſo as to be content with knowing what is good and uſeful, and not to pry with an unwarrantable curioſity into things that it did not belong to him to know. LETTER XIII.

Moſes farther informs us, that our firſt parents tranſgreſſed the command given them for the trial of their obedience, by eating the forbidden fruit. How they came to do this, when they were created innocent and upright, may ſeem ſtrange, and really is ſo. But the ſame objection might have been made with regard to the firſt ſin, or tranſgreſſion of the divine law, whenever it happened, whether among men or angels. For, except we ſuppoſe them to have been created actually depraved, or under a neceſſity of ſinning, which would be to make God himſelf the author of ſin, they muſt have been formed in a ſtate of purity and rectitude, and capable of keeping the law of God which was given them as the rule of their obedience. And then the difficulty would recur, how came they to fall and diſobey, when they might ſo eaſily have ſtood and continued

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tinued in their obedience? All that can be ſaid is, that man though created upright, and without any wrong affections or diſpoſitions, yet was a free agent, and therefore had it in his power to diſobey. The account given by *Moſes* of the firſt ſin is very ſhort. There were probably ſeveral circumſtances attending it, which we are not informed of. But from what is ſaid of it, we may gather that the tempter, who, by the conſent of the *Jewiſh* and *Chriſtian* church, was an evil ſpirit making uſe of the ſerpent as an inſtrument, endeavoured both to work upon the ſenſitive appetite, and upon that deſire of knowlege and pre-eminence ſo natural to the human mind, and which is of great advantage when kept within proper bounds. He might probably pretend, that the tree had an hidden excellent virtue in it, of which he might plead his own experience as a proof: And that therefore they had ſome way miſunderſtood the command, or at leaſt God would not be ſevere upon them if they tranſgreſſed it. If they had exerciſed their thinking powers, as they might and ought to have done, they might eaſily have ſeen through theſe ſpecious illuſions. But this they neglected, and were inexcuſable in doing ſo: Since they ought not to have hearkened to any pretences or inſinuations whatſoever againſt an expreſs divine command, ſo plainly given, and which was particularly deſigned as a trial of their obedience, and was ſo eaſy to be obſerved. Their diſobeying in ſuch circumſtances was in effect an attempt

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to throw off the allegiance they owed to God, an inſurrection againſt his ſovereign authority, and an arraigning his governing wiſdom, and the baſeſt ingratitude to his infinite goodneſs, which had placed them in ſuch a noble and happy ſtation, and had heaped ſo many favours and benefits upon them. And now they had nothing but diſmal proſpects before them. There was an unhappy change in the face of things. They were expelled out of paradiſe. The earth loſt much of its beauty and fertility: And they became ſubject to many pains, diſeaſes, and death. Yet God did not utterly caſt them off. He gave them tokens of his readineſs to receive them to his grace and favour upon their ſincere repentance. And by the original promiſe, the true nature and deſign of which was probably more diſtinctly explained to our firſt parents than is mentioned in that ſhort account, he gave them to underſtand, that he would not leave them to periſh without remedy under the curſe and miſery brought upon them by means of the tempter; and that he would raiſe up for them a glorious Deliverer who was to proceed from the woman's ſeed, and to reſcue them from the miſeries and ruin, to which they had expoſed themſelves by their ſin and apoſtaſy. And there is reaſon to think, that they had hopes given them, that though they were ſtill to be ſubject to many evils, and to temporal death as the effects and puniſhments of ſin, yet upon their repentance, and ſincere, tho' imperfect obedience, they

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they were to be raiſed to a better life. And accordingly the hopes of pardoning mercy, and the expectation of a future life, ſeem to have obtained from the beginning, and to have ſpread generally among mankind, and made a part of the primitive religion derived from the firſt parents and anceſtors of the human race.

I have laid theſe things together, that we may the better form a judgment concerning the *Moſaic* account. The ſum of it is this. That man was originally created pure and upright, conſtituted ſoon after his creation in a happy paradiſe, and admitted to many tokens of the divine love and favour: But that he fell from that ſtate by ſinning againſt God, and violating the command given him as a teſt of his obedience: And that he thereby brought death and miſery into the world with all the penal evils to which the human nature is now obnoxious. And theſe are excellent inſtructions. What can be more agreeable to right reaſon, or have a better effect, when really believed, than that God made man at firſt upright and happy, in a ſtate of moral rectitude: That ſin which was owing to his wilful defection from God, was the ſource of all the evils to which the human nature is now expoſed, and which therefore are not chargeable on God, or on his original conſtitution, but on man himſelf: That mankind are now in a lapſed ſtate, but not forſaken of God, who hath in his great goodneſs provided a proper remedy, and hath been pleaſed to aſſure them of his readineſs

dineſs to receive them to his grace and favour, and to accept and reward their repentance and ſincere obedience. LETTER XIII.

And now upon this view of things it will be no hard matter to anſwer the objections which Lord *Bolingbroke* hath urged againſt the *Moſaic* account of the fall.

He repreſents it as abſurd to ſuppoſe, that "this moral ſyſtem was deſtroyed by the wiles "of a ſerpent, and by the eating of an apple, "almoſt as ſoon as it began, againſt the intention as well as command of the creator *." As to the command given to our firſt parents to abſtain from the fruit of a particular tree, at the ſame time that they had a full grant made to them of all the other delicious fruits of paradiſe, it had nothing in it inconſiſtent with the divine goodneſs; and it hath been ſhewn, that in the circumſtances man was then in, it was a command very proper to be given; and the tranſgreſſing this command at the ſollicitations of any tempter whatſoever was an inexcuſable act of diſobedience: That this ſin was committed againſt the *intention as well as command of the Creator*, is very true, if by its being againſt his intention be underſtood that it was what he did not encourage or approve; though it was what he foreſaw, and thought fit in his wiſe providence to permit. He urges indeed, that "God "might have prevented man's fall by a little "leſs indulgence to what is called free-will †."

* Vol. III. p. 301. † *Ibid.*

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And he elſewhere mentions "the ſeverity with "which God puniſhed our firſt parents for a "fault which he foreknew they would commit, "when he abandoned their free-will to the "temptation of committing it *." This, if it proved any thing, would prove that it is unjuſt in God ever to puniſh any man for any ſin at all: For whenever men ſin, it may be ſaid that he leaves them to their own free-will, and that it is what he foreknew. No doubt God might by an exertion of his abſolute omnipotency have hindered our firſt parents from ſinning; and he might have hindered either men or angels from ever ſinning at all. But we ſee, that in fact he chuſes, as a moral governor, to deal with men as moral agents, and leaves them to the liberty of their own wills. And in the caſe here referred to man had full power to have ſtood, and to have reſiſted the temptation; and his not ſo doing was his own fault, and not owing to any defect of goodneſs in God. He himſelf furniſhes a proper anſwer to his own objection, when he obſerves, that "it may be truly "ſaid, that God when he gave us our reaſon, "left us to our free-will, to make a proper or "improper uſe of it; ſo that we are obliged to "our Creator for a certain rule and ſufficient "means of arriving at happineſs, and have "none to blame but ourſelves when we fail of "it †." And to the ſame purpoſe he ſaith, that "God has given to his human creatures the

* Vol. V. p. 321. † *Ib.* p. 388.

"mate-

" materials of physical and moral happiness, and LETTER XIII.
" has given them faculties and powers to collect
" and apply these materials.---What we shall do
" for ourselves, he has left to the freedom of
" our elections *."

He urges, that " the doctrine of two inde-
" pendent principles, the one good, the other
" evil, is not so absurd as the doctrine of an
" inferior dependent being, who is assumed to
" be the author of all evil; and that to affirm,
" that a God sovereignly good, suffers an infe-
" rior dependent being to deface his work in
" any sort, and to make his other creatures both
" criminal and miserable, is still more injurious
" to the Supreme Being †." And again he repeats it, that " it is inconsistent with the good-
" ness and wisdom of God, to suffer an inferior
" being, his creature, and a creature in actual
" rebellion, to baffle his designs ‡." And if he suffered this evil being to compel them to be criminal and miserable, it would be so. But not, if he suffered him only to tempt and to seduce, and at the same time made them every way able to withstand the temptation, and provided them with sufficient means to that purpose; which was the case of our first parents. God had done all that was proper for him to do as a moral governor to prevent the defection. He had formed them in a state of moral rectitude, and endued them with good dispositions.

* Vol. V. p. 474. † Vol. IV. p. 20.
‡ Vol. V. p. 321.

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The creation was freſh about them, and the glorious evidences of the divine wiſdom, power, and goodneſs! They knew that he was the Author of their beings, and that from him flowed all the bleſſings they enjoyed. He had given them the moſt expreſs injunction in the plaineſt terms, and ſtrongly inforced, to prevent their diſobedience. I ſee not therefore why God ſhould exert his own omnipotency to hinder Satan from tempting them, ſince he could only tempt, but not compel: And they were ſufficiently armed and provided againſt every temptation that could befal them, if they would but uſe the ſtrength and advantages they had; which, all things conſidered, were ſuperior to thoſe that any of their poſterity have been ſince poſſeſſed of.

His Lordſhip takes notice of "the ſeverity "which had been exerciſed on the whole race "of mankind, who ſhare in the puniſhment, "though not in the crime *." And again he charges the divines for ſuppoſing "that all man-"kind were puniſhed for the ſin of one †." That mankind are now ſubject to the evils *Moſes* mentions as the conſequence of the fall, barrenneſs of the ground, pains and ſickneſs in child-bearing, diſeaſes and death, is undeniable. The only difference between the *Moſaic* account, and that of thoſe who ridicule it, is that they ſuppoſe all theſe evils to be the neceſſary effects of the original conſtitution and appointment

* Vol. V. p. 321. † *Ib.* p. 485.—See alſo *Ib.* p. 284.

pointment of God at the first formation of man and of the world; but *Moses* supposes the original constitution of things to have been much more happy; and that all these evils were brought into the world in consequence of man's voluntary defection from God. And which of these suppositions is most honourable to God, and most likely, if believed, to have a good effect upon the minds of men, may be left to any impartial and thinking person to determine. And it seems very odd, that it should be represented as unjust in God to lay those evils upon men in consequence of the sin of our first parents, which they might easily have avoided, when it is accounted no reflection upon the justice and goodness of God to lay those evils upon men by the original constitution, without any regard to sin, either of their first parents, or their own. LETTER XIII.

On supposition that *Adam* and *Eve* were the fountains and protoplasts of the human race, it seems evident that their posterity must suffer under the consequences of their defection. If they were banished from Paradise, and it was just they should be so, their posterity could not expect to be continued in it. If their natures became tainted, and subject to diseases and death, they could only convey tainted and mortal natures to their offspring. It cannot be denied, that in the ordinary course of providence, children often suffer evils that were originally owing to the crimes of their parents and ancestors.

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ceſtors. Wicked parents often by their bad conduct forfeit advantages for their children as well as themſelves; and not only propagate diſtempered bodies to them, but conſidering the great influence that the bodily craſis and temperament hath upon the diſpoſitions of the mind, they are frequently inſtrumental in conveying bodily conſtitutions, which incline them to vicious affections and diſorderly paſſions, though they do not bring them under an abſolute neceſſity of ſinning, or imitating their father's vices; ſince it is appointed that mankind ſhould be propagated in a way of ſucceſſive generation, it is evident that children muſt in many caſes be greatly dependent on their parents, and derive great bleſſings or evils from them. And this may on many accounts be ſuppoſed to hold much more ſtrongly with reſpect to the firſt parents of the human race, than any others.

As to the exceptions our author makes againſt ſome particular expreſſions made uſe of, and circumſtances related, in the *Moſaic* account of the fall, they are no other than what have been frequently repeated and anſwered. Dr. *Tindal* had urged the ſame objections, and ſeveral others, more diſtinctly, and with greater force; and I have conſidered them largely and particularly in my anſwer to that writer; to which therefore I beg leave to refer, having already inſiſted longer on this ſubject than I intended *. I would only farther obſerve, that ſome re-

* See anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the creation, Vol. II.

markable

markable traces of the primitive paradisical state of man, and a fall from that state, are observable in the traditions of the antient sages, in different parts of the world. And there is great reason to think, that at the time when *Moses* writ, those traditions were more distinctly known. Lord *Bolingbroke* pronounces the account of the fall to be a *moral, philosophical* Egyptian *allegory*, designed to account for the introduction of evil *. And if he had looked upon it in that light, he had no right to urge the literal sense of it as an objection against the authority of the *Mosaic* writings. LETTER XIII.

I proceed in the last place to consider what his Lordship has offered with regard to the sanctions of the law of *Moses*. He observes, that "in "the twenty eighth chapter of *Deuteronomy*, "*Moses* on the renewal of the covenant be-"tween God and the people, employs no ar-"gument to induce the latter to a strict obser-"vation of it, of an higher nature than pro-"mises of immediate good, and threatenings "of immediate evil. They are exhorted to "keep the law, not for the sake of the law, "nor for the sake of God, but for considera-"tions of another kind, and where not only "their wants were to be supplied, but all their "appetites and passions to be gratified —— "their avarice, and all their other appetites "and passions. God purchased, as it were, "their obedience with this mercenary bar-"gain †." That we may judge of the con-

* Vol. V. p. 350. † Vol. III. p. 291, 292.

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ſiſtency of this writer, it is to be obſerved, that he himſelf, when ſpeaking in high terms of the law of nature, as having ſufficient proofs of a *divine ſanction*, and a *divine original*, affirms the ſanctions of that law to be *only temporal*, and that they are ſuch as affect *nations collectively*, not *men individually*. And he proves theſe divine ſanctions, as he calls them, to be ſufficient, becauſe ſuch as theſe were the ſanctions of the law of *Moſes* *. He often inſiſts upon it, that the only ſanction of the natural law appointed by divine providence is this, that national virtue ſhall produce national happineſs, and national vice ſhall produce national miſery. If therefore national bleſſings were promiſed in the *Moſaic* conſtitution as rewards of their obedience, and national evils and calamities denounced as the puniſhments of their wickedneſs and diſobedience, there was nothing in this, according to his ſcheme, but what was highly proper, and perfectly agreeable to the law of nature. Yet he thinks fit to repreſent it as a *mercenary bargain*; as if it was wrong to annex any ſanctions at all to that law; for if any were annexed, they muſt upon his ſcheme of principles, be only of a temporal nature. As to what he obſerves, that "the *Iſraelites* were exhorted to keep "the law, not for the ſake of the law, nor for the "ſake of God, but for conſiderations of another "kind, in which all their appetites and paſſions, "their ambition, avarice, *&c.* were to be grati-

* Vol. V. p. 90.

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"fied." This is very unfairly repreſented. The bleſſings promiſed in the paſſage he refers to, *Deut.* xxviii. 1, 14. are indeed chiefly of a national kind. But there is no promiſe made to them of extenſive conqueſt and univerſal empire; and it is evident, as I have elſewhere ſhewn *, that their conſtitution was not deſigned or fitted for it. If they obeyed the laws given them, they were to have fruitful and healthful ſeaſons, to enjoy peace, plenty, and many bleſſings, in their own land. And it was promiſed them, that if they were invaded by their enemies, they ſhould be protected againſt them, and prove victorious over them: That they ſhould be happy and honourable above all other nations: And that God would eſtabliſh them an holy people to himſelf, which included a promiſe of having their ſpiritual privileges continued to them, with the tokens of God's ſpecial favour and gracious preſence among them, which was their happineſs and their glory. Any one that impartially conſiders the *Moſaical* writings, will find, that the laws there given to the *Iſraelites* are enforced upon them by a great variety of important conſiderations. The excellency of the laws themſelves is repreſented; as particularly *Deut.* iv. 6, 7, 8. And frequently is that ſhort but comprehenſive declaration ſubjoined to their laws, *I am the Lord*, Jehovah. They are urged to obedience by the conſideration of God's ſovereign authority and ſupreme dominion, of his

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* See anſwer to Morgan, Vol. I. p. 134, 135.

infinite

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infinite righteouſneſs and goodneſs, of the great things he had done for them, and the ſpecial relation he ſtood in towards them, by the gratitude they owed to him for all his benefits, by the hope of his favour, and fear of his diſpleaſure. For they were taught that noble leſſon, that in and from him alone they were to look for happineſs, whether relating to the people in general, or to particular perſons.

It may not be improper on this occaſion to obſerve, that his Lordſhip has taken upon him to affirm, that "there cannot be any thing ſo im-"piouſly intereſted and craving, as the ſenti-"ments aſcribed by *Moſes* to the patriarchs." And he inſtances "in *Jacob*'s vow, and the con-"ditional engagement he took with God." *Gen.* xxviii. 20, 21, 22. ‡ But to ſet this matter in a proper light, of which he has been pleaſed to make a moſt unjuſt repreſentation, it muſt be conſidered, that immediately before the account which is given us of *Jacob*'s vow, we are informed of a viſion he had when he was ſetting out upon his journey to *Padan-Aram*, in which God renewed the promiſes to him, which had been made to *Abraham* concerning the giving the land of *Canaan* to his poſterity, and that in his ſeed all the families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed: At the ſame time aſſuring him, that he would be with him in all places whither he went, and would bring him again into that land, ver. 12, 15. It was in

‡ Vol. III. p. 291, 292.

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consequence of this vision that *Jacob* made his vow the next morning; the design of which was to express the sense he had of the divine goodness, and his confidence in God's gracious protection; and to declare his solemn resolution, that if God would be with him, and keep him in his way, and would give him *bread to eat*, and *raiment to put on* [which shews the moderation of his desires] so that he should come again to his father's house in peace, he would after his return make an open public acknowlegement of his gratitude and devotion to the Lord as his God, set apart that place where God had appeared to him to his worship, and would devote the tenth of all the substance God should give him to his service. This instead of being *impiously interested and craving*, will appear to every person that judges candidly and impartially to be a great argument of the simplicity and goodness of *Jacob*'s heart, and of a pious and well-disposed mind: Though undoubtedly it must appear absurd to our author, who does not believe that God concerneth himself with the individuals of the human race. LETTER XIII.

His Lordship frequently observes, that in the law of *Moses* there is no mention made of future rewards and punishments. He sometimes positively asserts, that *Moses* did not believe the immortality of the soul, nor the rewards and punishments of another life; for if he had, he would have taught it to that people; and that *Solomon* the wisest of their kings decides against it.

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it *. But in other paſſages he inſinuates, that *Moſes* might poſſibly believe it himſelf, though he did not think proper to mention it to the people; and repreſents it as a moſt ſurprizing thing, that "a doctrine ſo uſeful to all religions, "and therefore incorporated into all the ſyſtems "of Paganiſm, ſhould be left wholly out of "that of the *Jews* †." And he endeavours to draw an argument from this againſt the divine original of this conſtitution. This is what he particularly urgeth in the concluſion of the twenty-firſt of his Fragments and Eſſays in his fifth volume, where he introduces it in a very pompous manner "as an obſervation, which "he does not remember to have ſeen or heard "urged on one ſide, or anticipated on the "other, and which, he thinks, evidently ſhews "how abſurd as well as improper it is to aſcribe "theſe *Moſaical* laws to God." The obſervation is this: That "neither the people of *Iſrael*, "nor their legiſlator perhaps, knew any thing "of another life, wherein the crimes commit-"ted in this life are to be puniſhed.—— Al-"though he might have learned this doctrine, "which was not ſo much a ſecret doctrine, as it "may be preſumed the unity of the ſupreme "God was, among the *Egyptians*. Whether "*Moſes* had learned this among their ſchools, "cannot be determined; but this may be ad-"vanced with aſſurance: If *Moſes* knew that "crimes, and therefore idolatry one of the

* Vol. III. p. 290. † Vol. V. p. 238, 239.

"greateſt,

" greateſt, were to be puniſhed in another life, LETTER
" he deceived the people in the covenant they XIII.
" made by his intervention with God. If he
" did not know it, I ſay it with horror, the
" conſequence according to the hypotheſis I
" oppoſe, muſt be, that God deceived both him
" and them. In either, a covenant or bargain
" was made, wherein the conditions of obe-
" dience and diſobedience, were not fully, nor
" by conſequence fairly ſtated. The *Iſrael-*
" *ites* had better things to hope, and worſe to
" fear, than thoſe that were expreſſed in it.
" And their whole hiſtory ſeems to ſhew how
" much need they had of theſe additional mo-
" tives to reſtrain them from polytheiſm and
" idolatry, and to anſwer the aſſumed purpoſe
" of divine providence *." This is his boaſted argument, and what ſeems mightily to recommend it to him, he looks upon it to be new, and what no man had inſiſted on before.

My firſt remark upon it is this: That he could not with any conſiſtency urge the not making expreſs mention of a future ſtate, as an argument to prove that *it is abſurd and impious to aſcribe the* Moſaical *law to God*, ſince it appears from ſeveral parts of his book, that he himſelf did not believe the rewards and puniſhments of a future ſtate. He ought rather upon his hypotheſis to have conceived a high opinion of *Moſes*'s ſtrict regard to truth, ſince he choſe not to make uſe of a pious fraud, or of falſe

* Vol. V. p. 195.

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and deceitful motives, when it would have been his intereſt, and for the advantage of his laws, to have done ſo. If it be ſaid, that this is only urged as an argument *ad hominem*, which though falſe and inconcluſive in itſelf, yet is concluſive upon the hypotheſis of his adverſaries, and proper to diſtreſs and embarraſs them, they will perhaps find it no difficult matter to defend themſelves againſt this dilemma. For if it ſhould be allowed, that neither *Moſes*, nor any of the people, had any aſſurance of a future ſtate, it would not follow, that God in not revealing it deceived him or them. If indeed he had expreſly told them, that the notion of a future ſtate was falſe, and that they had no rewards or puniſhments to fear after this life is at an end, then ſuppoſing there were future rewards and puniſhments, this would have been a deceiving them in the ſtricteſt, propereſt ſenſe. But merely not to reveal it to them, was not to deceive them. And whereas he urges, that on that ſuppoſition there was a covenant or bargain made, in which the conditions of obedience and diſobedience were not fully, nor by conſequence fairly ſtated; this proceeds upon the ſuppoſition, that if God made a covenant with them, he would not deal fairly, if he did not lay before them all the rewards and puniſhments of their obedience and diſobedience; which certainly is a concluſion that cannot be juſtified. If God had only aſſured them in general, that if they kept his commandments, they ſhould be

be intitled to his favour, and if they diſobeyed they ſhould feel the awful effects of his diſpleaſure, this ought to have been enough to have engaged them: And it could not be ſaid in that caſe that he dealt unfairly by them: Eſpecially ſince he might have commanded their obedience, and demanded their ſubjection to his laws in a way of abſolute authority, without any expreſs ſtipulations on his part at all. Whatever particular promiſes or threatnings he added depended upon his ſovereign good pleaſure, and he might reveal thoſe things in what meaſure or degree he in his wiſdom ſhould think fit. Our author himſelf has found out a reaſon for it, *viz.* that the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments "was dreſſed up with ſo many fabulous "circumſtances among the *Egytians*, that it "was hard to teach or renew this doctrine in "the minds of the *Iſraelites*, without giving "an occaſion the more to recal the polytheiſtical fables, and practice the idolatrous rites, "they had learned during their captivity in "*Egypt* §." LETTER XIII.

But let us put the other ſuppoſition, and which I take to be the true one, *viz.* that *Moſes* and the *Iſraelites* did believe a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments. This writer himſelf frequently intimates, that it was believed among the *Egyptians*, and that it was not a part of the ſecret doctrine confined only to a few, but was ſpread and propagated among the vulgar. It

§ Vol. V. p. 240, 241.

is

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is therefore reaſonable to believe that this doctrine obtained among the *Iſraelites* too, eſpecially as by his own acknowlegement, it obtained among the *Babylonians*, and indeed among all the antient nations, as far as we have any accounts left us of their ſentiments. And it cannot with the leaſt probability be ſuppoſed, that the *Iſraelites* were the only people that were ignorant of it, and had no notion of that kind among them at all: Except we imagine that they were taught to believe the contrary; of which there is not the leaſt proof: Nor is there any thing in the writings of *Moſes* to contradict that notion. On the contrary, there are ſeveral things in thoſe writings which by a fair conſtruction imply it. Our author ſeems to think that the *Moſaical* account of the formation of man implies that his ſoul was a particle of the divinity †. There is no reaſon to ſuppoſe this. But it certainly leads us to acknowlege a remarkable diſtinction of the ſoul from the body: That it is a nobler ſubſtance, more nearly reſembling the divinity, and not like the body formed of the duſt of the ground. What *Moſes* ſaith of God's gracious acceptance of *Abel*'s ſacrifice, who yet was murdered, and met with no reward of his piety, no good effects of God's acceptance of him, except we take in the conſideration of a future ſtate: The account he gives of the tranſlation of *Enoch*, that he *walked with God*, and *that he was not, for God took him*, which

† Vol. IV. p. 480.

in

In the moſt natural conſtruction implies the taking him out of this world to a better ſtate: It is repreſenting the patriarchs, as calling this their preſent life the *few and evil days of their pilgrimage*, which ſhewed they *wiſhed for a better country, that is an heavenly*. To which may be added, the accounts there given of the appearances of angels, which naturally led the *Iſraelites* to acknowlege an inviſible world of ſpirits. Nor can any inſtances be brought of any nations, who believed the exiſtence of angels and ſeparate intelligences, and yet did not believe the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate: The expreſs declarations of *Solomon*, that the *righteous hath hope in his death*; the clear diſtinction he makes between the ſoul and body, that at death the latter ſhall *return to the earth as it was*, and the former, the *ſpirit, ſhall return to God that gave it*; and that there ſhall be a future account in which *every work ſhall be brought into judgment*, with *every ſecret thing whether it be good or whether it be evil:* The aſſumption of *Elias* into heaven, which naturally led the thoughts of all that heard of it to another world, where good men ſhall be eminently rewarded: All theſe things, not to mention ſeveral paſſages in the Pſalms and in the Prophets which plainly look this way, convince me that a future ſtate was all along believed among that people*. And indeed it does not LETTER XIII.

* See this more fully proved in the Anſwer to Dr. Morgan, Vol. I. p. 339, et ſeq.

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appear, that at the time of *Moſes*, any man had ariſen, as there did in the latter ages, who through the vain deceit and falſe refinements of philoſophy denied it. As to the promiſes and threatenings addreſſed to the people of *Iſrael* as a collective body, of which kind thoſe ſeem to be which are mentioned, *Levit.* xxvi. and *Deut.* xxviii. theſe no doubt were directly and immediately of a temporal nature: And the ſtriking repreſentations that are there made of the conſequences of their obedience or diſobedience in this preſent world, ſeem very well fitted to make ſtrong and vigorous impreſſions upon them, and to give them a lively ſenſe of the conſtant interpoſition of divine providence. But beſides this, the tenor of their law led them to think that the happineſs of every individual perſon among them, and his intereſt in the favour of God depended upon his obedience to the divine commands, and the practice of righteouſneſs. This eſpecially ſeems to have been the deſign of that general declaration in the law, that the man that did the precepts, there enjoined, ſhould *live* by them. And there is no reaſon to think that they looked upon this as wholly confined to this preſent world. That it was underſtood to have a more extenſive view may be reaſonably concluded from what is ſaid in the eighteenth chapter of *Ezekiel*, where the equity of the divine proceedings is vindicated, and where it is expreſly declared with the greateſt ſolemnity concerning every particular perſon that

that ſhould forſake his evil ways, and turn to the practice of righteouſneſs, that he ſhould *not die*, but ſhould ſurely *live*, *i. e.* be happy; and concerning every wicked and impenitent ſinner, that he ſhould ſurely die, *i. e.* be miſerable; which muſt have its principal effect in a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments: Since even under that conſtitution it often happened that particular good men were expoſed to many outward evils and calamities, and that bad men had great outward proſperity. What made it more neceſſary to inſiſt explicitly and fully upon the doctrine of a future ſtate in the Goſpel, was, that through the corruption of mankind the antient belief of the immortality of the ſoul and a future ſtate was very much obſcured and defaced. As to the heathens there were many among thoſe who made great pretenſions to learning and philoſophy that abſolutely rejected it, and moſt of thoſe who did not poſitively reject it, yet treated it as a thing doubtful and uncertain. And it had been ſo much blended with fables, that at laſt it ſeemed to have little hold even on vulgar opinion; as his Lordſhip obſerves in a paſſage cited above, p. 255, 256. To which it may be added, that there was at that time a conſiderable party even among the *Jews* themſelves, conſiderable for their power and quality, though not for their numbers, who denied it. On all theſe accounts it became the divine wiſdom to interpoſe by a more expreſs revelation, containing clearer diſcoveries, and fuller proofs of it, than

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LETTER XIII. than had been ever given to mankind before. And this revelation was very properly brought by the moſt illuſtrious meſſenger that could be ſent from heaven, the Son of God himſelf, that glorious and divine perſon whoſe coming had been ſo long promiſed and foretold. To which it may be added, that as the Goſpel did not contain a ſyſtem of laws immediately addreſſed to any particular nation as the *Moſaical* was, ſo none of the promiſes or threatenings there delivered relate directly and immediately to national bleſſings or calamities, but are ſuch in which every individual of the human race ſhould look upon himſelf as nearly intereſted.

Thus I have conſidered the principal objections advanced by Lord *Bolingbroke* againſt the holy Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, and eſpecially againſt the *Moſaic* writings. There are ſome other objections interſperſed, and which he rather briefly hints at than purſues, and which ſcarce deſerve a diſtinct conſideration. He thinks that a divine law ought always to have the effect. "Human laws may be eluded, and miſs of the "effect. But if God gives a law, it may be "preſumed, that effectual care ſhould be taken "to make that law obſerved; whereas there "never was a law that leſs had the deſigned "effect than that of *Moſes*, from which the "people were continually revolting *." This argument would hold equally againſt the law of nature, which he himſelf affirms to be the

* Vol. III. p. 393.

law

law of God, and yet owns that men have revolted from it in all ages. But it has been ſhewn, that the law of *Moſes* had actually a great effect, and that by virtue of it the worſhip of the one true God was maintained among the *Jews* in a manner which eminently diſtinguiſhed them above the heathen nations: And that polity was ſurprizingly preſerved in all the revolutions of their ſtate till the coming of our Saviour, for which it remarkably prepared the way, and thus anſwered the ends the divine wiſdom had in view in inſtituting it. LETTER XIV.

He ſeems to blame *Moſes* for not having taken the proper meaſures to make his laws obſerved, as *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* did afterwards. But if the directions which *Moſes* gave had been purſued, never were there better and wiſer precautions taken to engage the people to make themſelves acquainted with their law, and oblige them to a careful obſervation of it. And all that *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* did was to bring things back as near as poſſible to the original inſtitution and deſign. The ſignal calamities inflicted upon the *Jews* in the time of the *Babyloniſh* captivity, the greateſt that had ever befallen them, the utter deſolation of their country, and their having been ſo long baniſhed from it, which calamities had been originally threatened in the law itſelf, and were regarded by them as ſignal puniſhments from heaven for their violation of it: This, together with their wonderful reſtoration at the time that had been fixed for it

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by the prophets, awakened in them a zeal againſt idolatry, and an attachment to their law, greater than ever they had ſhewn before.

He urges farther, that "a divine law ſhould "have ſuch a clearneſs and preciſion in its "terms, that it may not be in the power of per-"ſons to elude and perplex the meaning of it. "And that if it be not ſo, all that is ſaid about "marks of divinity in any law that pretends "to be revealed by God, is mere cant*." This is particularly intended againſt the law of *Moſes*. And yet certain it is, that if the people frequently fell off into idolatrous practices, and perhaps endeavoured to reconcile theſe their practices with the worſhip of God as there preſcribed, this could not be juſtly charged upon any want of preciſion in the terms of the law. For what can be clearer and more preciſe than the commands there given againſt polytheiſm and idolatry? Nothing can be more unreaſonable, than what he ſometimes inſinuates, that if a revelation be given at all, it muſt be ſuch as it ſhould not be in the power of any man to miſapprehend or miſrepreſent †. It may be of ſignal uſe to perſons of honeſt and candid minds, though it be not abſolutely incapable of being perverted and abuſed; which it could not be, if delivered in human language; except God ſhould by an omnipotent energy, and by a conſtant miracle, over-rule all the paſſions, inclina-

* Vol. III. p. 292, 293. 296. † Vol. V. p. 545. Vol. IV. p. 261. 267.

tions,

tions, and prejudices of the human nature: The absurdity of which ſuppoſition, though it be what this writer ſeems ſometimes to inſiſt upon, I need not take pains to expoſe. LETTER XII.

He thinks, "the Scriptures ought to be more "perfect according to our ideas of human per-"fection, whether we conſider them as books "of law or of hiſtory, than any other books "that are avowedly human *." I ſuppoſe he means that there ſhould be greater elegancy of compoſition, beauty of language, exactneſs of method, or that they ſhould be more ſtrictly philoſophical. But perhaps what ſeems elegant to one nation would not appear ſo to another. The notions of elegance in ſtyle and compoſition were different among the *Greeks* and *Romans*, from what they were in the Eaſtern nations. And what might render the Scriptures more perfect in the eyes of ſome perſons, might render them leſs perfect in other reſpects, and leſs fitted to anſwer the end for which they were deſigned. To talk of elegancy of compoſition in human laws, or to blame acts of parliament for not being oratorial, would be thought a very odd objection. But it is the great excellency of the ſacred writings, that there is in the different parts of Scripture what may pleaſe perſons of all taſtes. There is a ſimplicity and plainneſs accommodated to the vulgar: And yet there is in many paſſages a ſublimity and majeſty not

* Vol. III. p. 290.

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to be equal'd, and which has gained the admiration of the ableſt judges.

As to what he ſometimes mentions concerning the multiplicity of copies, various readings, interpolations, I had occaſion fully to conſider theſe things in the *Reflections on Lord* Bolingbroke's *Letters on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory*, p. 65, *et ſeq.* and ſhall not repeat what is there offered. He has flirts here and there againſt ſome particular paſſages of Scripture, a diſtinct examination of which would carry me too far. And they are only ſuch as Dr. *Tindal* had urged before him, and which have been conſidered and obviated in the anſwers that were made to that writer. See particularly *Anſwer to Chriſtianity as old as the Creation*, Vol. II. Chap. XI, XII.

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The favourable repreſentation made by Lord Bolingbroke *of the excellent nature and deſign of the original Chriſtian revelation. He gives up ſeveral of the Deiſtical objections, and even ſeems to acknowlege its divine original. Yet endeavours to expoſe its doctrines, and to invalidate its proofs and evidences. The law of Nature and Chriſtianity not to be oppoſed to one another. The Goſpel not a republication of the doctrine of* Plato. *The pretended oppoſition between the Goſpel of Chriſt and that of St.* Paul *conſidered. This apoſtle vindicated againſt the cenſures and reproaches caſt upon him. The miracles of Chriſtianity, if really wrought, owned by Lord* Bolingbroke *to be a ſufficient proof. The Goſpels, by his own acknowlegement, give a juſt account of the diſcourſes and actions of* Jeſus. *Yet he has attempted to deſtroy their credit. His pretence, that it would be neceſſary to have the originals of the Goſpels in our hands, or atteſted copies of thoſe originals, examined. The ſeveral ways he takes to account for the propagation of Chriſtianity ſhewn to be inſufficient. What he offers concerning the little effect Chriſtianity has had*

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in the reformation of mankind conſidered. Want of univerſality no argument againſt the divinity of the Chriſtian revelation. Its being founded on faith not inconſiſtent with its being founded on rational evidence.

SIR,

I Now come according to the method I propoſed to conſider what relates to the Chriſtian revelation ſtrictly and properly ſo called, as it was taught by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and is contained in the ſacred writings of the New Teſtament. Indeed whoſoever carefully conſiders and compares the ſeveral parts of Lord *Bolingbroke*'s ſcheme, muſt be ſenſible, that the whole of it may juſtly be regarded as an attempt againſt Chriſtianity. If the principles he has laid down with regard to the moral attributes of God, divine providence, the immortality of the ſoul, and a future ſtate, ſhould take place, the Chriſtian religion would be ſubverted at the very foundations. This is alſo the manifeſt intention of the account he gives of the law of nature. And one reaſon of the extreme virulence with which he hath attacked the law of *Moſes* and the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament, ſeems to be the near connection there is between this and the religion of *Jeſus*, which he repreſents to have been originally intended by our Saviour as a ſyſtem of *Judaiſm*, and deſigned for no other

other nations but the *Jews* only *. But though all he hath offered againſt the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament may be regarded as deſigned to ſtrike at the authority of the Chriſtian revelation, yet there are ſome parts of his work, which appear to be more particularly intended for that purpoſe, which therefore it will be neceſſary to take a diſtinct notice of. LETTER XIV.

But firſt it will be proper to make ſome obſervations on ſeveral paſſages in his writings, in which he ſeems to make very remarkable conceſſions in favour of pure genuine Chriſtianity as taught by our Saviour and his apoſtles in the New Teſtament, and to make an advantageous repreſentation of its excellent nature and tendency.

After having obſerved, that ſome repreſent all religion founded on divine revelation as inconſiſtent with civil ſovereignty, and erecting a private conſcience that may and often is inconſiſtent with the public conſcience of the ſtate, and after inveighing againſt the ſpirit of *Judaiſm* and *Mahometaniſm*, he undertakes to defend Chriſtianity againſt this objection —— And aſſerts, that "no religion ever appeared in "the world whoſe natural tendency was ſo "much directed to promote the peace and happineſs of mankind." See the fourth ſection of his fourth Eſſay †. He declares, that "no ſyſtem can be more ſimple and plain than that

* Vol. IV. p. 305, 328, 350. † Vol. IV. p. 281, 282.

"of

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" of natural religion as it ſtands in the Goſpel *." And after having obſerved, that " beſides natural religion, there are two other parts into " which Chriſtianity may be analyſed----Duties " ſuperadded to thoſe of the former, and articles " of belief that reaſon neither could diſcover " nor can comprehend." He acknowleges, that " both the duties required to be practiſed, and " the propoſitions required to be believed, are " conciſely and plainly enough expreſſed in the " original Goſpel properly ſo called, which " Chriſt taught, and which his four Evangeliſts " recorded. But they have been alike cor- " rupted by theology †." Speaking of the Chriſtian ſacraments of Baptiſm and the Lord's Supper, he ſays, " No inſtitutions can be ima- " gined more ſimple, nor more void of all " thoſe pompous rites and theatrical repreſenta- " tions, that abounded in the religious worſhip " of the Heathens and *Jews*, than theſe two " were in their origin. They were not only " innocent but profitable ceremonies, becauſe " they were extremely proper to keep up " the ſpirit of true natural religion by keeping " up that of Chriſtianity, and to promote the " obſervation of moral duties, by maintaining " a reſpect for the revelation which confirmed " them ‡." He declares, that " he will not " ſay, that the belief that *Jeſus* was the Meſ- " ſiah is the only article of belief neceſſary to " make men Chriſtians. There are other

* Vol. IV. p. 290, 292. † *Ib.* p. 294. ‡ *Ib.* p. 301, 302.

things

" things doubtleſs contained in the revelation LETTER XIV.
" he made of himſelf, dependent on and re-
" lative to this article, without the belief of
" which, I ſuppoſe, our Chriſtianity would be
" very defective. But this I ſay, that the ſyſtem
" of religion which Chriſt publiſhed, and his
" Evangeliſts recorded, is a complete ſyſtem to
" all the purpoſes of religion natural and re-
" vealed. It contains all the duties of the
" former, it inforces them by aſſerting the di-
" vine miſſion of the Publiſher, who proved
" his aſſertions at the ſame time by his mira-
" cles; and it inforces the whole law of faith
" by promiſing rewards, and threatening pu-
" niſhments, which he declares he will diſtri-
" bute when he comes to judge the world *."
And he afterwards repeats it, that " Chriſtianity
" as it ſtands in the Goſpel contains not only a
" complete but a very plain ſyſtem of religion.
" It is in truth the ſyſtem of natural religion,
" and ſuch it might have continued to the un-
" ſpeakable advantage of mankind, if it had
" been propagated with the ſame ſimplicity
" with which it was originally taught by Chriſt
" himſelf †." He ſays, that " ſuppoſing Chri-
" ſtianity to have been an human invention, it
" had been the moſt amiable and the moſt uſe-
" ful invention that was ever impoſed on man-
" kind for their good.—And that Chriſtianity
" as it came out of the hands of God, if I may
" uſe the expreſſion, was a moſt ſimple and

* Vol. IV. p. 314. † *Ib.* p. 316.

" intelligible

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" intelligible rule of belief, worſhip, and man-
" ners, which is the true notion of a religion.
" As ſoon as men preſumed to add any thing of
" their own to it, the human alloy corrupted
" the divine maſs, and it became an object of
" vain, intricate, and contentious ſcience *."
After having obſerved, that " the political
" views of *Conſtantine* in the eſtabliſhment of
" Chriſtianity, were to attach the ſubjects of
" the empire more firmly to himſelf and his
" ſucceſſors, and the ſeveral nations which com-
" poſed it to one another, by the bonds of
" a religion common to all of them; to ſoften
" the ferocity of the armies; to reform the li-
" centiouſneſs of the provinces; and by in-
" fuſing a ſpirit of moderation, and ſubmiſſion
" to government, to extinguiſh thoſe principles
" of avarice and ambition, of injuſtice and
" violence, by which ſo many factions were
" formed, and the peace of the empire ſo often
" and ſo fatally broken:" He declares, that
" no religion was ever ſo well proportioned,
" nor ſo well directed, as that of Chriſtianity
" ſeemed to be, to all theſe purpoſes." He
adds, that " it had no tendency to inſpire that
" love of the country, nor that zeal for the
" glory and grandeur of it, which glowed in
" the heart of every *Roman* citizen in the time
" of the commonwealth: But it recommended
" what *Conſtantine* liked better, benevolence,
" patience, humility, and all the ſofter vir-

* Vol. IV. p. 394, 395.

" tues."

"tues *." He alloweth, that "the Goſpel is LETTER XIV.
"in all caſes one continued leſſon of the
"ſtricteſt morality, of juſtice, of benevolence,
"and of univerſal charity." He mentions
"Chriſt's blaming his diſciples for being wil-
"ling to call for fire from heaven againſt the
"*Samaritans*.—And that the miracles wrought
"by him in the mild and beneficent ſpirit of
"Chriſtianity, tended to the good of man-
"kind †." He obſerves, that "the theology
"contained in the Goſpel lies in a narrow com-
"paſs. It is marvellous indeed, but it is plain,
"and it is employed throughout to enforce na-
"tural religion ‡." After having ſaid, that
"the articles of faith have furniſhed matter of
"contention in, as well as from, the apoſtolical
"age, and have added a motive to that cruel
"principle, which was never known till Chri-
"ſtians introduced it into the world, to perſe-
"cution even for opinions;" he adds, that
"the charge which the enemies of religion
"bring againſt Chriſtianity on this account is
"unjuſtly brought. Theſe effects have not
"been cauſed by the Goſpel, but by the ſyſtem
"raiſed upon it, not by the revelations of God,
"but by the inventions of men ‖." He pro-
feſſes a great concern for true Chriſtianity in op-
poſition to theology, and ſays, that "genuine
"Chriſtianity was taught of God §." And
not to multiply paſſages to this purpoſe, he pro-

* Vol. IV. p. 433. † *Ib.* p. 188, 189. ‡ *Ib.* p. 261.
‖ *Ib.* p. 313. § *Ib.* p. 349.—See alſo Vol. III. p. 339.

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nounces, that "the Chriſtian ſyſtem of faith and "practice was revealed by God himſelf, and it "is abſurd and impious to aſſert, that the divine "*Logos* revealed it incompletely or imperfectly. "Its ſimplicity and plainneſs ſhewed, that it "was deſigned to be the religion of mankind, "and manifeſted likewiſe the divinity of its "original."

I have choſen to lay together theſe ſeveral paſſages relating to Chriſtianity in one view. And if we were to look no farther, we ſhould certainly entertain a very favourable opinion of Lord *Bolingbroke*'s ſentiments with regard to the truth, the excellency, and divine original, of the Goſpel of *Jeſus*.

I ſhall here ſubjoin ſome reflections which have occurred to me in reviewing theſe paſſages, and others of the like import, which are to be found in his Lordſhip's writings.

The firſt reflection is this, That there muſt certainly be a wonderful beauty and excellency in the religion of *Jeſus*, conſidered in its original purity and ſimplicity, which could force ſuch acknowlegements from a perſon ſo ſtrongly prejudiced againſt it, as his Lordſhip appears to have been. According to the repreſentation he himſelf has been pleaſed to make of it, it was a *moſt amiable* and *moſt uſeful* inſtitution, whoſe natural tendency was directed *to promote the peace and happineſs of mankind*. It contains *all the duties of natural religion*, and teaches

* Vol. III. p. 451.

them

them in *the moſt plain and ſimple manner.* It is *one continued leſſon of the ſtricteſt morality, of juſtice, of benevolence, and of univerſal charity*; and tends to extinguiſh thoſe *principles of avarice and ambition, of injuſtice and violence*, which have done ſo much miſchief in the world, and diſturbed the peace and order of ſociety. As its moral precepts are excellent, ſo its poſitive inſtitutions are not only *innocent* but *profitable*, and *extremely proper to keep up the ſpirit of religion.* He acknowleges, that conſidered in its original ſimplicity, it was a *moſt ſimple and intelligible rule of belief, worſhip, and practice:* That the *theology contained in the Goſpel is marvellous, but plain:* And that the *ſyſtem of religion there taught* is a *complete ſyſtem, to all the purpoſes of religion natural and revealed*, and might have continued ſo *to the unſpeakable advantage of mankind, if it had been propagated with the ſame ſimplicity with which it was taught by Chriſt himſelf.* I think it plainly follows from this repreſentation of the nature and tendency of the Chriſtian religion as taught by our Saviour and his apoſtles, that thoſe can in no ſenſe be regarded as real friends to mankind, who do what they can to ſubvert its authority, and thereby deſtroy its influence on the minds of men, and who by artful inſinuations, or even open attempts, endeavour to bring true original Chriſtianity into contempt; as it will appear this writer, notwithſtanding all his fair profeſſions, hath done.

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Another reflection that may be made on Lord *Bolingbroke's* conceſſions is this: That he has in effect given up ſeveral objections which have been urged by the Deiſtical Writers, and on which great ſtreſs has been laid, and has acknowleged them to be of no force againſt the religion of *Jeſus* as laid down in the Goſpel. It has been pretended, that Chriſtianity, or revealed religion, is not friendly to civil ſovereignty, or government; but he treats thoſe that make this objection, if deſigned againſt Chriſtianity as revealed in the Goſpel, and not merely againſt the duties that have been ſuperadded to it, as *falling below notice*, and *ſcarce deſerving an anſwer* *: And praiſes the policy of *Conſtantine* in endeavouring to eſtabliſh Chriſtianity as the religion of the empire, as being the beſt fitted of all religions to promote the public peace and order, to reform licentiouſneſs, to curb factions, and to infuſe a ſpirit of moderation, and ſubmiſſion to government. See the paſſages cited above from Vol. IV. p. 282, 433.

Again, Chriſtianity and revealed religion hath been often objected againſt on account of its poſitive precepts, or inſtitutions, added to the law of nature. But his Lordſhip thinks "it "may be admitted, that things intirely and exactly conſiſtent with the law of our nature "may be ſuperadded to it by the ſame divine authority, and that poſitive precepts may be given "about things which are indifferent by the law

* Vol. IV. p. 300, 301.

"of

" of our nature, and which become obliga- LETTER
" tory as ſoon as they are injoined by ſuch po- XIV.
" ſitive precepts *." And particularly with regard to the poſitive inſtitutions of Chriſtianity, or the Chriſtian ſacraments as enjoined in the Goſpel, in their primitive ſimplicity, he acknowleges in a paſſage above produced, that they were extremely proper to keep up the ſpirit of true religion, and to promote the obſervation of moral duties †.

Another objection which hath been urged againſt Chriſtianity, is drawn from that ſpirit of perſecution which hath obtained amongſt Chriſtians on account of opinions in religion. But he ſaith, that " the charge which the enemies " of Chriſtianity bring againſt it on this ac- " count is unjuſtly brought: That theſe effects " have not been cauſed by the Goſpel, but by " the ſyſtem raiſed upon it, not by the revela- " tions of God, but by the inventions of men." And he mentions Chriſt's blaming his diſciples for being willing to call for fire from heaven upon the *Samaritans*; and that all that he inſtructed his apoſtles to do, even in caſes of the moſt enormous crimes, was to ſeparate ſinners from the communion of the faithful ‡.

There is no objection which hath been more frequently urged againſt the Chriſtian religion, than its teaching doctrines or articles of belief,

* Vol. V. p. 547. † Vol. IV. p. 301. —— See alſo *ib.* p. 310, 311, 591. ‡ Vol. IV. p. 188, 189, 313.

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that *reaſon neither could diſcover, nor can comprehend.* He aſſerts, that there are articles or doctrines of this kind in the Goſpel; but that they are *conciſely and plainly enough expreſſed in the original Goſpel properly ſo called, which Chriſt taught, and which his four Evangeliſts recorded*; though they have been ſince *corrupted by theology* *." And ſpeaking of "reaſonable "men who have received the Chriſtian revela- "tion, for genuine, after a ſufficient examina- "tion of the external and internal proofs;" he ſays, "Such men having found nothing that "makes it inconſiſtent with itſelf, nor that is "repugnant to any of the divine truths which "reaſon and the works of God demonſtrate to "them, will never ſet up reaſon in contradic- "tion to it, on account of things plainly taught, "but incomprehenſible as to their manner of "being. If they did, their reaſon would be "falſe and deceitful; they would ceaſe to be "reaſonable men †." It is true, that he elſewhere ſaith, that "if the things contained in "any revelation be above reaſon, *i. e.* incom- "prehenſible, I do not ſay in their manner of "being; for that alone would not make them "liable to objection, but in themſelves, and "according to the terms in which they are "communicated, there is no criterion left by "which to judge whether they are agreeable or "repugnant to the religion of nature and of

* Vol. IV. p. 294. † *Ib.* p. 384. — See alſo p. 279.

"reaſon.

" reaſon. They are not therefore to be re- LETTER XIV.
" ceived *." But it is to be conſidered, that when divines talk of things above reaſon in the Chriſtian ſyſtem, all that they mean by it is, that they are things not contrary to reaſon, but as to the manner of them inconceivable: And according to his own conceſſion, it can be no objection againſt the truth or divinity of revelation, that it containeth an account of ſome things which are *incomprehenſible in their manner of being.*

Another reflection that is proper to be made upon what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath acknowleged with regard to the original Chriſtian revelation as laid down in the Goſpel of *Jeſus* is, that he hath on ſeveral occaſions ſeemed expreſly and formally to own its divine original. In ſome of the paſſages above cited, he directly declares, that *genuine Chriſtianity was taught by God*— That the *Chriſtian ſyſtem of faith and practice was revealed by God himſelf* — And that the *firſt publiſher of Chriſtianity proved his aſſertions by his miracles.* To which I ſhall add another remarkable paſſage in the concluſion of his fourth Eſſay, which is *concerning authority in matters of religion.* " Chriſtianity, ſaith he, " genuine Chriſtianity, is contained in the " Goſpel; it is the word of God: It requires " therefore our veneration and ſtrict conformity " to it †." He ought therefore, if he were

* Vol. V. p 546. † Vol. IV. p, 631, 632. —— See alſo *Ib.* p. 279. and Vol. III. p. 339.

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conſiſtent with himſelf, on the authority of that revelation, to receive what is there plainly revealed concerning the moral attributes of God; concerning divine providence as extending to the individuals of the human race, concerning Chriſt's being the great mediator between God and man, and concerning our redemption by his blood, and concerning a ſtate of future rewards and puniſhments. And yet he hath endeavoured to ſubvert all theſe. Notwithſtanding his profeſſed regard for Chriſtianity, he hath on ſeveral occaſions uſed his utmoſt efforts to weaken or deſtroy the proofs of its divine original, to miſrepreſent and expoſe its doctrines and laws, thoſe doctrines which he himſelf declares to have been original doctrines of the Chriſtian religion. How far ſuch a conduct is conſiſtent with that truth and candor, that honeſty and ſimplicity of heart, which becometh a ſincere enquirer, and who declareth, that he hath nothing but truth in view, may be left to any fair and impartial perſon to determine.

In my reflections on this part of Lord *Bolingbroke's* works, the method I ſhall obſerve is this: I ſhall firſt conſider thoſe paſſages that ſeem deſigned to ſtrike at the authority of Chriſtianity in general; and then ſhall proceed to conſider the objections he hath urged againſt ſome particular laws and doctrines of our holy religion.

With

With regard to Chriſtianity in general, he runs a parallel, in the ſeventh and eighth of his Fragments and Eſſays, between the law of nature and Chriſtianity. He compares the clearneſs and certainty of the former with that of the latter. He compares alſo their ſanctions, and endeavours to ſhew, that the law of nature reſts on fuller proofs than any that have been found, or can be given, of the divine inſtitution of Chriſtianity *. In all that he offers on this head, he goes upon the ſuppoſition of the abſolute clearneſs and certainty of the law of nature to the whole human race; and what he has urged to this purpoſe has been conſidered in my ninth Letter. But it may be eaſily ſhewn, that the whole parallel he there draws between the law of nature and Chriſtianity, and between the proofs of the former, and of the latter, is entirely impertinent. He himſelf there declares, that "every friend to Chriſtianity admits that the Chriſtian law is nothing elſe "than the law of nature confirmed by a new "revelation, and that this is what the worſt of "its enemies does not deny, though he denies "the reality of the revelation †." It is not true, that the Chriſtian law is nothing elſe than the law of nature: But that it comprehends it, that it clears and enforces it, is very true. It does not take off from any rational argument or evidence brought in favour of that law, and beſides confirmeth it by an expreſs divine teſtimony.

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* Vol. V. p. 90, *et ſeq.* † *Ib.* p. 93.

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And muſt not common ſenſe lead every man to acknowlege, that it muſt be a mighty advantage to have the law of nature thus farther cleared and confirmed? The proofs therefore of Chriſtianity, and of the law of nature, are not to be oppoſed to one another. Both have a friendly harmony: And Chriſtians have the great advantage of having both theſe proofs in conjunction. Chriſtianity ſuppoſeth the law of nature, cleareth it where it was obſcured, enforceth it by the ſtrongeſt ſanctions, and addeth things which could not be known merely by that law, and which yet it was of importance to mankind to be acquainted with. So that Chriſtianity, as far as it relates to, and republiſhes the law of nature, has all the advantages which this writer aſcribes to that law, becauſe it is that very law more clearly publiſhed, and ſtrongly confirmed: And in this reſpect there is no competition between them. And with reſpect to thoſe things in Chriſtianity which are not clearly comprehended in that law, and which we could not have diſcovered merely by our own unaſſiſted reaſon, it is not to be wondered at if they are not ſo obvious to our underſtandings: But as far as they are neceſſary to be known by us they are revealed in the Goſpel; and we are not obliged to believe them farther than they are there revealed. Nor ſhall thoſe be condemned for not believing them, who have had no opportunity of being acquainted with that revelation. Though our author, in order to caſt an odium

odium on Chriſtianity, after having obſerved, LETTER XIV.
that "the law of nature is univerſally given to "all mankind," adds, that "the greateſt part "of the world are invincibly ignorant of the "firſt principles of Chriſtianity, without the "knowlege of which, and without faith in "which, they are all condemned to eternal "puniſhment*."

We have ſeen that our author declareth Chriſtianity to be the law of nature enforced by a new revelation: So that according to this repreſentation, it is a *divine republication of the law of nature*. Yet he elſewhere thinks proper to repreſent it as only a *republication of the doctrines of* Plato. And any one that conſiders the repreſentation he hath frequently made of that philoſopher and his doctrines, muſt be ſenſible that this is far from being deſigned as a compliment to the Chriſtian revelation. Some account of his invectives againſt him was given in the fifth Letter. He calls him a *mad theologiſt*—And tells us, that no *man ever dreamed ſo wildly as* Plato *wrote*—And that he *introduced a falſe light into philoſophy, and oftener led men out of the way of truth, than into it.* Yet he ſays, it is ſtrange to obſerve "the ſtrange "conformity there is between *Platoniſm* and "*genuine Chriſtianity* itſelf, ſuch as it is "taught in the original Goſpel. We need not "ſtand to compare them here. In general the "*Platonic* and Chriſtian ſyſtems have a very

* Vol. V. p. 91.

"near

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" near reſemblance, *qualis decet eſſe ſororum*, " and ſeveral of the antient fathers and modern " divines have endeavoured to make it appear " ſtill greater. —— That this may give unbe- " lievers occaſion to ſay that if the doctrines " are the ſame, they muſt have been deduced " from the ſame principle; and to aſk, what " that principle was, whether reaſon or reve- " lation? If the latter, *Plato* muſt have been " illuminated by the Holy Ghoſt, and muſt " have been the precurſor of the Saviour, and " of more importance than St. *John*. He an- " ticipated the Goſpel on ſo many principal ar- " ticles of belief and practice, that unbelievers " will ſay, it was a republication of the theo- " logy of *Plato*; And that as the republication " was by divine revelation, the publication muſt " have been ſo too: And they will ask with a " ſneer, whether a man, whoſe paſſion for cour- " tezans and handſome boys inſpired him to " write ſo many lewd verſes, was likely to be " inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt *." This is mean banter, taking advantage of the too great admiration ſome particular perſons have expreſſed for *Plato*. But he has not traced the conformity between *Platoniſm* and genuine original Chriſtianity, under pretence that it was needleſs. He owns, that *Plato blundered on ſome divine truths* †. That on ſome occaſions he wrote *like a very pious and rational theiſt and moraliſt*; and that *very elevated ſentiments*

* Vol. IV. p. 349. † *Ib.* p. 348.

may

may be collected from his writings: That there is in them *a mixture of the brighteſt truths, and the fouleſt errors* *. It is not to be wondered at therefore, that there was in ſeveral inſtances a conformity between the doctrine of *Plato*, and that of the Goſpel. But he himſelf acknowleges, that there were many things in his ſcheme contrary to that of Chriſtianity. He ſays, that "ſome of *Plato*'s writings abound in "notions that are agreeable to the Chriſtian ſy"ſtem, and in others that are repugnant to it †." That "far from going about to deſtroy the Pa"gan ſuperſtition, he refined it, and made it "more plauſible, and more ſecure from the at"tacks to which it was expoſed before ‡." And that accordingly "*Platoniſm* anſwered the "purpoſes of thoſe who oppoſed Chriſtianity ||." I would only farther obſerve, that there is no writer whom he repreſents as ſo unintelligible as *Plato*; and yet he intimates, that if he had known and taught the peculiar doctrines of the Goſpel, "he who is ſo often unintelli"gible now would have been vaſtly more ſo, "and leſs fitted for the great work of reform"ing mankind §." This is a very odd inſinuation from one who has acknowleged, that true original Chriſtianity is a *plain and intelligible ſyſtem of belief and practice*. And that its *ſimplicity and plainneſs ſhewed that it was de-*

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* Vol. IV. p. 345, 352. † *Ib.* p. 344, 345. ‡ *Ib.* p. 355. || *Ib.* p. 359. § Vol. V. p. 226.

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ſigned to be the religion of mankind, and manifeſted likewiſe the divinity of its original.

It may be looked upon as a farther proof of his regard to Chriſtianity, that he repreſents it as an inconſiſtent ſcheme. He pretends, that the New Teſtament conſiſteth of two Goſpels, the one publiſhed by our Saviour himſelf, and recorded by the evangeliſts, the other by St. *Paul.*

He obſerves, that "Chriſt was to outward appearance a *Jew*, and ordered his diſciples to do what the Scribes and Phariſees who ſat in *Moſes*'s chair taught——And that when he commiſſioned his apoſtles to teach and baptize all nations, he only meant it of the *Jews* diſperſed into all nations."——He aſſerts, that "the myſtery of God's taking the Gentiles to be his people without ſubjecting them to circumciſion, or the law of *Moſes*, was inconſiſtent with the declarations and practice of *Jeſus* *." He asks therefore, "If this was the purpoſe of God to take the Gentiles to be his people under the Meſſiah, how came it that the Meſſiah himſelf gave no inſtructions about it to his apoſtles, when he ſent them to preach his Goſpel to all nations! Why was the revelation of this important myſtery, ſo neceſſary at the firſt publication of the Goſpel, reſerved for St. *Paul*, who had been a perſecutor? Shall we ſay, that this eternal purpoſe of the Father was un-

* Vol. IV. p. 305.

"known

" known to the Son? Or, that if it was known LETTER
" to him, he neglected to communicate it to XIV.
" the first preachers of the Gospel?" He seems to think these questions unanswerable, and that " the *pertness* and *impudence* of the men that " pretend to account for these things, *deserves* " *no regard* *." And yet it is no hard matter to solve these difficulties. The calling of the Gentiles was originally included in our Saviour's scheme. It was a remarkable part of the character of the Messiah, clearly pointed out in the prophetical writings, by many express predictions. Our Lord himself during his own personal ministry gave plain intimations of his design that way, and after his ascension into heaven instructed his apostles in it by his spirit, whom he sent to guide them into all truth. And the gradual discovery of this in a way fitted to remove their prejudices was conducted with admirable wisdom as well as condescension.

Mr. *Chubb* had insisted on this objection at great length. And I shall therefore refer to the remarks made upon that writer in my former volume, p. 360, 361. yet upon no better foundation than this his Lordship hath taken upon him to affirm, that " the Gospel St. *Paul* preached was " contradictory to that of *Jesus Christ*:" And that " he taught several doctrines, which were " directly repugnant to the word and example " of the Messiah †." And indeed our author hath on many occasions discovered a particular

* Vol. IV. p. 326. † *Ib.* p. 328.

prejudice

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prejudice againſt that great apoſtle. He calls him a *true cabbaliſtical architect* *, a looſe paraphraſer and *cabbaliſtical commentator, as much at leaſt as any antient or modern rabbi.* And that the different manner of his preaching the Goſpel, and that of the other apoſtles, "marks "ſtrongly the different ſchools in which they "had been educated, the ſchool of Chriſt, and "the ſchool of *Gamaliel* †." But nothing is more evident to every one that reads the New Teſtament with attention than that there is a perfect harmony between St. *Paul* and the other apoſtles: And that the ſcheme of religion taught in the Goſpels and in the Epiſtles is every-where the ſame. Such a harmony there is as ſhews they were all directed by the ſame ſpirit. The Goſpel which St. *Paul* preached was what he received by revelation from *Jeſus Chriſt*, as he himſelf declares, *Gal.* i. 12. He had not learned it in the ſchool of *Gamaliel*. On the contrary, in that ſchool he had imbibed the ſtrongeſt prejudices againſt the religion of *Jeſus*, and which nothing leſs than a power of evidence which he was not able to reſiſt could overcome. He was very well verſed in the *Jewiſh* learning; yet none of the apoſtles ſo frequently warned the Chriſtian converts againſt the *Jewiſh* fables, or ſpeaks with ſuch contempt of their vain traditions, their endleſs genealogies, their ſtrifes and queſtions about words, as he has done.

* Vol. III. p. 288. † *Ib.* p. 527, 528.

There

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There are ſeveral invidious charges brought by our author againſt this excellent perſon. He is pleaſed to repreſent him as a *looſe declaimer*, as a *vain-glorious boaſter*, as having been guilty of *great hypocriſy and diſſimulation* in his conduct towards the *Jewiſh* Chriſtians, as writing *obſcurely* and *unintelligibly*, and that where he is *intelligible*, he is *abſurd*, *profane*, and *trifling* *. He particularly inſtances in his doctrine concerning predeſtination †. Though he owns, that "this doctrine is very much ſoftened, and "the aſſumed proceedings of God towards men "are brought almoſt within the bounds of credibility, by Mr. *Locke*'s expoſition of the "ninth chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*," which he calls a *forced one*, but offers nothing to prove it ſo; and acknowleges, that *this ſenſe might be admitted* ‡. He alſo charges him with teaching paſſive obedience, and as *employing religion to ſupport good and bad governments alike* ‖. Though any one that impartially conſiders the apoſtle's doctrine in the paſſage he refers to, *viz.* the thirteenth chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*, will find it wiſe and excellent. Mr. *Chubb* had advanced the ſame charge, as well as moſt of the others that are produced by Lord *Bolingbroke* againſt that eminent apoſtle: And that I may not be guilty of needleſs repetitions, I ſhall refer to the remarks made on that

* Vol. III. p. 328, 330. 331. † *Ib.* p. 331, 509. Vol. V. p. 567. ‡ *Ib.* p. 456. ‖ Vol. IV. p. 509, 516.

writer

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writer in the former volume, p. 337, 338. 367, 368.

His Lordſhip mentions that paſſage, 1 *Cor.* vi. 5, 14. about women's propheſying with their heads uncovered, and that it is a ſhameful thing for men to wear long hair, which he ſays, is the *moſt intelligible trifling that we find in the Goſpel.* This is very improperly brought in by the author here, where he propoſes to ſhew that where St. *Paul* is not obſcure he is *profane* and *trifling.* For this is generally acknowleged to be one of the obſcureſt paſſages in St. *Paul's* Epiſtles. But this is no real objection againſt their authority. Some obſcure and difficult paſſages muſt be expected in the moſt excellent of antient writings, eſpecially in things that have a ſpecial reference to the cuſtoms and uſages of thoſe times. He is pleaſed to ſay, that the *argument may not appear very concluſive, nor indeed very intelligible to us:* And if ſo, he has done wrong to produce it as an inſtance of intelligible trifling: But he ſneeringly adds, that *it was both,* he *doubts not,* to *the Corinthians.* And I doubt not they underſtood it better than we at this diſtance can pretend to. He then mentions the apoſtle's directions to the *Corinthians* with regard to the prudent and orderly exerciſe of thoſe ſpiritual gifts: And theſe directions cannot reaſonably be turned to the diſadvantage of the apoſtle, when they are undeniably wiſe and excellent.

His

His Lordſhip in his prejudice againſt St. *Paul*, carrieth it ſo far as to pronounce, "That St. "*Paul* received nothing immediately from "Chriſt:" Though he himſelf in the paſſage before referred to affirms, that he received the Goſpel he preached, *not of man, neither was he taught it, but by the revelation of* Jeſus Chriſt. He adds, that "St. *Paul* had no apo-"ſtolical commiſſion, except that which he aſ-"ſumes in the Acts of the Apoſtles, written by "St. *Luke*, and dictated probably by him-"ſelf *." And again, that "he entered a vo-"lunteer into the apoſtleſhip, at leaſt his extra-"ordinary vocation was known to none but "himſelf." And if St. *Paul* dictated that account to St. *Luke*, it deſerves the greateſt credit, ſince he was the propereſt perſon in the world to give an account of it. But the truth of his apoſtolical commiſſion did not depend merely upon his own word. It was made manifeſt by the moſt illuſtrious proofs and credentials, to which he could with confidence appeal †, and was acknowleged by the other apoſtles, though this writer is pleaſed to inſinuate the contrary ‡. Indeed the plain meaning of his whole charge here is, that St. *Paul* was an impoſtor, and that his call to the apoſtolical office was intirely his own fiction. But the great abſurdity of this pretence has been ſo fully expoſed in Sir *George Lyttleton's Obſervations on*

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* Vol. IV. p. 388, 389. † 2 Cor. xii. 11, 12.
‡ Gal. ii. 7, 8, 9.

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the converſion and apoſtleſhip of St. Paul, that it is perfectly needleſs to add any thing farther on that head. I ſhall only obſerve, that whoſoever with a candid and unprejudiced mind conſiders the whole character and conduct of that great apoſtle, as repreſented in the Acts of the Apoſtles, and the temper and ſpirit which breathes in his admirable Epiſtles, will be apt to think that never was there among mere men a more perfect character than that of St. *Paul.* In him we may behold a ſhining example of the moſt exalted and unaffected piety towards God, the moſt fervent and active zeal for the divine glory, yet not a blind enthuſiaſtic heat, but a zeal according to knowlege, and conducted with great prudence: The moſt extenſive and diſintereſted charity and benevolence towards mankind, and the moſt earneſt and affectionate concern for their ſalvation and happineſs; the moſt ſteady fortitude and conſtancy under the ſevereſt trials and ſufferings, which he endured with patience and even with joy, ſupported and animated by the earneſt deſire he had to ſerve the glorious cauſe of truth and righteouſneſs, and by the ſublime hopes of an everlaſting reward in a better world for his faithful ſervices in this. Never was there a truer greatneſs of mind than that which he manifeſted. And all this accompanied with a moſt amiable humility, and a great tenderneſs of ſpirit in bearing with the weakneſſes and infirmities of others. He was a moſt glorious inſtrument in the hand of providence

vidence for promoting the ſacred intereſts of pure and undefiled religion in the world. Our author ſays, that *Socrates* was the *apoſtle of the Gentiles in natural religion*, as St. *Paul* was *in revealed*. But no inſtance can be brought of any one perſon whom the former converted from the prevailing polytheiſm and idolatry. And how ſhould this be expected, when he himſelf, as his Lordſhip owns, countenanced it by his own practice, and was *for the religion eſtabliſhed by the laws* *. But the latter turned thouſands in many different nations from darkneſs unto light, and from ſerving idols to ſerve the living and true God, and from the moſt abandoned vice and diſſoluteneſs of manners to the practice of virtue and righteouſneſs; which he performed in oppoſition to the ſeemingly moſt inſuperable difficulties, and through a ſucceſſion of the greateſt labours and ſufferings that any one man ever endured. This has always highly recommended him to the eſteem and admiration of thoſe who have a zeal for true original Chriſtianity. And on the other hand, the enemies of our holy religion have always diſcovered a peculiar averſion to this excellent perſon, who was ſo ſucceſsful an inſtrument in propagating it. And this ſeems to be the true reaſon of that obloquy and reproach which Lord *Bolingbroke* has been ſo induſtrious to fix on ſo admirable a character.

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* Vol. IV. p. 193.

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His real intentions towards Chriſtianity will farther appear, if we conſider the attempts he hath made to invalidate the proofs and evidences of it.

He frequently ſpeaks with the utmoſt contempt of thoſe that inſiſt upon the internal characters of a divine original, which are to be obſerved in the revelation delivered in the holy Scriptures. By rejecting the internal characters he pretends to aſſert the authority of the Bible, and very gravely adviſes the divines to confine themſelves to the external proofs, and to dwell very little on the internal characters, and repreſents them as talking a great deal of blaſphemy on this head *. And yet he himſelf, as appears from ſome of the paſſages that have been above cited, has acknowleged ſeveral things with regard to Chriſtianity as taught in the Goſpels, which have been deſervedly reckoned among the internal characters, which lead us to acknowlege that it came from God: Such as, the excellent tendency of its doctrines, precepts, and ſacraments; its being *one continued leſſon of the ſtricteſt morality, of juſtice, of charity and univerſal benevolence*; its being *a complete ſyſtem to all the purpoſes of religion natural and revealed*; its *plainneſs and ſimplicity, which*, he ſays, *ſhewed that it was deſigned to be the religion of mankind, and manifeſted likewiſe the divinity of its original.* It is true, that he charges thoſe with *madneſs, and ſomething*

* Vol. III. p. 271, 272.—Vol. IV. p. 229.

worſe

worſe than madneſs, who in arguing concerning the internal characters, "pretend to comprehend "the whole œconomy of the divine wiſdom from "*Adam* down to *Chriſt*, and even to the conſum- "mation of all things, and to connect all the diſ- "penſations." And this is one part of his quarrel with St. *Paul*, whom, as well as the divines, he very unfairly repreſents as undertaking to *ſhew the ſufficient reaſon of providence in every particular inſtance* from the beginning of the world to the end of it *. But however he is pleaſed to repreſent it, it is a noble contemplation, and highly for the honour of the ſacred writings, that there we may obſerve one and the ſame glorious plan carried on by the divine wiſdom and goodneſs from the beginning for the recovery and ſalvation of lapſed man: Succeſſive revelations communicated at different times and in divers manners, and at the diſtance of ſeveral ages from one another, yet all ſubſervient to the ſame glorious purpoſes, and mutually confirming and illuſtrating each other: The law and the prophets in their ſeveral ways conſpiring to prepare the way for the revelation of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and to furniſh divine atteſtations to it. The religion carried on under the ſeveral diſpenſations ſtill for ſubſtance the ſame; and whatever ſeeming variety there may be in the parts, an admirable harmony in the whole.

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His Lordſhip ſpeaking of what he calls the *internal proofs* of the Chriſtian revelation, ob-

* Vol. III. p. 271, 272.—Vol. IV. p. 129.

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ſerves, in a ſneering way, that "the contents of "the whole Chriſtian ſyſtem laid down in our "Scriptures are objects of ſuch a probability, as "may force aſſent very reaſonably in ſuch a caſe, "without doubt; although a concurrence of "various circumſtances, improved by the cre-"dulity of ſome men, and the artifice of "others, forced this aſſent in caſes not very diſ-"ſimilar *." He has not thought fit to produce an inſtance of a falſe revelation, whoſe evidence can be juſtly compared to that of Chriſtianity. And as to his expreſſion of *forcing aſſent* by a *probability*, it is like many others of his, very improper. No Chriſtian talks of forcing aſſent, nor would a forced belief have any great merit in it. But that there are ſufficient grounds to make it reaſonable to aſſent to it is very true. And this is what his Lordſhip ought to have acknowleged, if, as he himſelf confeſſes, "it has all the proofs, which the "manner in which it was revealed, and the "nature of it, allowed it to have †." This is in effect to own, that the proofs of Chriſtianity are ſufficient in their kind. And if this be the caſe, it is, according to the rule he himſelf has laid down, unreaſonable to demand more. For he obſerves, that "common ſenſe requires that "every thing propoſed to the underſtanding, "ſhould be accompanied with ſuch proofs as "the nature of it can furniſh. He who re-

* Vol. V. p. 93. † *Ib.* p. 91.

"quires

" quires more, is guilty of abſurdity; he who requires leſs, of raſhneſs *." LETTER XIV.

With regard to the external proofs of Chriſtianity, his Lordſhip does not, as ſeveral of the Deiſtical Writers have done, deny miracles to be proper or ſufficient proofs. On the contrary, he ſometimes affects to cry up the mighty efficacy of miracles, as alone ſufficient, without any conſideration of the goodneſs of the cauſe for which they were wrought, or examination of the doctrines they atteſt. And finds fault with " that maxim as contrary to common ſenſe; " that is not for admitting miracles as proofs of " a divine original, without conſideration of " the cauſe or doctrines: Since real miracles " can be operated by no power but that of " God, nor for any purpoſe by conſequence; " but ſuch as infinite wiſdom and truth direct " and ſanctify †." Accordingly he declares, ſpeaking of the Chriſtian revelation, that " conſidering the glorious perſon by whom it was " brought, and the ſtupendous miracles that " were wrought to confirm it, we might be " ready to conclude, that it muſt have forced " conviction, and have taken away even a poſſibility of doubt ‡." And he repeats it again, that " Chriſtianity was confirmed by miracles, " and the proof was no doubt ſufficient for the " conviction of all thoſe who heard the publi" cation of this doctrine, and ſaw the confir" mation of it. One can only wonder that

* Vol. III. p. 246. † Vol. IV. p. 227, 228. ‡ *Ib.* p. 461.

LETTER XIV. "any such remained unconvinced *." His design was undoubtedly to insinuate, that the miracles were not really wrought; because if they had been wrought they must have convinced all those that saw them. To talk of miracles as forcing conviction is to carry it to an unreasonable extreme, as any man must be sensible, that considers human nature, and the mighty influence of prejudices, passions, and worldly interests. We have however his concession, that miracles are sufficient for convincing those who saw them: And if so, they must be proportionably sufficient for the conviction of those who have a reasonable ground of assurance, that these miracles were really wrought, though they were not themselves eye-witnesses of them. The original proof of Christianity therefore was by his own account every way sufficient. The only question that remains is whether we have proper evidence to convince us that these miracles were actually performed. And of this we have evidence sufficient to satisfy every candid and impartial enquirer, and all that could be reasonably insisted upon in such a case. For the proof of this I shall refer to what has been already observed in my fourth Letter in answer to Mr. *Hume*.

The most remarkable of all the miracles by which the divine authority of the Christian religion is confirmed is the resurrection of *Jesus Christ*. And as to this, his Lordship observes,

* Vol. V. p. 91.

that

that " Chriſt ſcarce ſhewed himſelf to the few " who were ſaid to have ſeen him after his reſur- " rection in ſuch a manner, as they could know " by it certainly that it was he whom they had " ſeen. I ſay the few, becauſe St. *Paul*, who had " not probably ever ſeen *Jeſus*, deſerves no credit " when he affirms againſt the whole tenor of " the Goſpels, that he and above five hundred " brethren at once had ſeen him after his reſur- " rection." He has here plainly let us know, that after all his profeſſed regard for Chriſtianity, he is very willing to deny that which is the principal proof of our Saviour's divine miſſion, and to which he himſelf ultimately appealed as ſuch. But we have nothing but confident aſſertions, after his Lordſhip's manner, and a bold charging St. *Paul* with a falſhood without the leaſt proof. For as to his pretence, that it is contrary to the whole tenor of the Goſpels, there is no foundation for it. The more to expoſe St. *Paul* he repreſents it as if he had affirmed, that he himſelf was preſent, and ſaw *Jeſus* at the ſame time that he was ſeen of five hundred brethren at once. Whereas he ſaith no ſuch thing, but rather the contrary, 1 *Cor.* xv. 6, 8. But as to Chriſt's being ſeen by ſo many perſons, St. *Paul* ſpeaks of it as a thing certainly known, and that the greater part of them were then alive when he wrote to the *Corinthians*. And the queſtion is, whether St. *Paul* is to be believed in a fact which he publicly affirmed in

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in that very age, and for the truth of which he appeals to great numbers of perſons then living, or this writer who at the diſtance of 1700 years, gives us his own word for it that there was no ſuch thing? But I ſhall not need to add any thing farther on this ſubject here, having conſidered it ſo fully in the eleventh Letter of the former volume, which contains remarks on *the reſurrection of* Jeſus *conſidered.*

The accounts of the extraordinary facts whereby Chriſtianity was atteſted, as well as of its original doctrines, are tranſmitted to us in the ſacred writings of the New Teſtament, particularly in thoſe of the Evangeliſts, and in the Acts of the Apoſtles. And it has been often ſhewn, that never were there any writings, which carry greater marks of purity, ſimplicity, and uncorrupted integrity, and of an impartial regard to truth, or which have been tranſmitted with a clearer and a more continued evidence. With regard to the writings of the Evangeliſts, Lord *Bolingbroke* hath himſelf acknowleged, that "it is out of diſpute, that we have in our "hands the Goſpels of *Matthew* and *John*, "who give themſelves out for eye and ear-wit-"neſſes of all that Chriſt did and taught. That "two chanels were as ſufficient as four to con-"vey thoſe doctrines to the world, and to pre-"ſerve them in their original purity. The "manner too in which theſe Evangeliſts re-"corded them, was much better adapted to "this purpoſe than that of *Plato*, or even of "*Xenophon*,

" *Xenophon*, to preſerve the doctrines of *So-* LETTER
" *crates*. The Evangeliſts did not content XIV.
" themſelves to give a general account of the
" doctrines of *Jeſus Chriſt* in their own words,
" nor preſume in feigned dialogues to make
" him deliver their opinions in his own name.
" —They recorded his doctrines in the very
" words in which he taught them, and they
" were careful to mention the ſeveral occaſions
" on which he delivered them to his diſciples or
" others. If therefore *Plato* and *Xenophon*
" tell us with a good degree of certainty what
" *Socrates* taught, the two Evangeliſts ſeem to
" tell us with much more what the Saviour
" taught and commanded them to teach *."
He finds fault indeed with *Eraſmus* for making Chriſt to ſay to his diſciples, in his paraphraſe on the firſt chapter of the Acts, that " the holy ſpirit would not only recal to their " minds all he had taught them, but ſuggeſt " likewiſe unto them whatever it might be ne- " ceſſary for them to know." And he adds, that " cavillers will ſay, that theſe words were " added by *Eraſmus* to the text for reaſons " very obvious, and are not contained in the " text." But there is certainly very little ground for ſuch a cavil, ſince it appears from the ſacred text itſelf, that our Saviour did both promiſe to ſend his ſpirit to *bring all things to their remembrance whatſoever he had ſaid unto them*: And alſo to *lead* them into *all truth*, and in-

* Vol. IV. p. 390.

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ſtruct them in things in which he himſelf had not fully inſtructed them during his perſonal miniſtry, becauſe they were not then *able* to *bear* them, *John* xiv. 26. xvi. 12, 13, 14.

Notwithſtanding the fair acknowlegement he had made of the credibility of the Goſpels which are now in our hands, he hath thrown out ſeveral hints which are plainly deſigned to deſtroy the credit of them. Thus he talks of a multitude of different Goſpels that were compoſed in the firſt ages, he thinks, *no leſs than forty.*—And asks, "If the Goſpels received into the "canon are favourable to the orthodox belief, "how do we know that the other Goſpels "were exactly conformable to theſe?" He talks, as Mr. *Hobbes* had done before him, as if "the authenticity of the four Goſpels depended "on the council of *Laodicea*, which admitted "four, and rejected the reſt." And adds, that "every Church judged of the inſpiration of "authors, and of the divine authority of books; "and that thoſe authors were deemed inſpired, "and thoſe books were canonized, in which "every particular Church found the greateſt con-"formity with their own ſentiments *." But this is very unfairly repreſented. There is nothing capable of a clearer proof, than that there was a general agreement in the Churches throughout the world, from the firſt age of Chriſtianity, in receiving the four Goſpels, the Acts of the Apoſtles, and St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles: That the ſpu-

* Vol. IV. p. 404, 405.

rious

rious Goſpels he ſpeaks of were never generally received in the Chriſtian Church as of divine authority: And that the primitive Chriſtians were very careful and ſcrupulous not to receive any books into the ſacred canon, but thoſe of whoſe authenticity they had ſufficient proofs. Nothing can be more abſurd, and more contrary to plain undeniable fact, than to pretend that the ſacred books of the New Teſtament were not looked upon as authentic and divine before the council of *Laodicea*, which was held not till after the middle of the fourth century. They were not firſt made ſo by that council, which only declared what had been long before received as of divine authority in the Chriſtian Church. I need not ſay any more upon this ſubject in this place, but ſhall refer to the third Letter of the former Volume, which contains ſome account of *Toland's Amyntor*, and the anſwers that were made to it. To which may be added what I have offered in the *Reflections on Lord* Bolingbroke's *Letters on the ſtudy and uſe of Hiſtory*, p. 102. *et ſeq.* LETTER XIV.

In order to weaken the credit of the original ſacred records of the Chriſtian religion, his Lordſhip hath farther obſerved, that "in other "hiſtories, if paſſages which we deem genuine "ſhould be ſpurious, if others ſhould be cor-"rupted or interpolated, and if the authors "ſhould have purpoſely or through deception "diſguiſed the truth, or advanced untruth, no "great hurt could be done. But that in the

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" Scripture, beſides all the other circumſtances " neceſſary to conſtitute hiſtorical probability, " it is not enough that the tenor of facts and " doctrines be true, the leaſt error is of conſe- " quence." — He produces two inſtances to prove it, neither of which relate to any Scripture expreſſions at all. — And then he adds, that " when we meet with any record cited in " hiſtory, we accept the hiſtorical proof, and " content ourſelves with it, of how many co- " pies ſoever it be the copy. But this proof " would not be admitted in judicature, as Mr. " *Locke* obſerves, nor any thing leſs than an " atteſted copy of the record. And he thinks, " that if ſuch a precaution be neceſſary in mat- " ters of private property, much more is it ne- " ceſſary that we receive nothing for the word " of God, that is not ſufficiently atteſted to be " ſo." He takes notice of what the reverend Dr. *Conybeare*, now Lord Biſhop of *Briſtol*, has ſaid in anſwer to this; of whom he ſpeaks with a reſpect which is extremely juſt, but which, conſidering his uſual manner of treating the Chriſtian divines, could ſcarce have been expected from him towards one who had diſtinguiſhed himſelf in defending the Chriſtian cauſe. The anſwer of Dr. *Conybeare* which he refers to is this, " That the ground of this pro- " ceeding in civil cauſes, ſeems to be, that the " original record, or an atteſted copy, is capa- " ble of being produced; and that therefore " to offer any diſtant proof might look as if ſome

" art were intended to corrupt matters, and to LETTER XIV.
" diſguiſe the truth. But it is not in the nature
" of things poſſible to produce the originals or
" atteſted copies of the Scriptures." This appeareth to me to be a good obſervation. But his Lordſhip is not ſatisfied with it. He anſwers, that " the reaſon why the copy of a copy is re-
" fuſed in proof is not ſolely becauſe the ori-
" ginal or an atteſted copy may be had, but be-
" cauſe the proof would be too diſtant whe-
" ther they could be had or no."——And he thinks, " if the rule be thought reaſonable in
" the one caſe, it cannot be thought, without
" abſurdity, unreaſonable in the other. ——
" However it happens, the want of an original
" or of an atteſted copy is a want of proof *."
But it is not the want of any proof that can be reaſonably deſired, or that is poſſible to be had, or that is neceſſary in any caſes of the like kind. By the conſent of all mankind, there may be ſufficient evidence of the truth and authority of antient writings to convince any reaſonable perſon, though neither the originals nor any atteſted copies of the originals be now remaining. And the man would only render himſelf ridiculous that ſhould reject them as unworthy of credit, and give no other reaſon for rejecting them, but the want of ſuch originals or atteſted copies. And why ſhould a condition be inſiſted on as neceſſary with regard to the Scriptures, which would be accounted abſurd to the laſt

* Vol. IV. p. 272.

degree,

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degree, if inſiſted on with regard to any other antient writings whatſoever? To which it may be added, that when great numbers of copies are taken from an original, and got into many hands, and diſperſed into various parts, by comparing theſe copies there ariſes a ſtronger proof in the nature of things, to ſatisfy a reaſonable perſon that thoſe writings have not been materially corrupted or falſified, than if there were only one ſingle copy remaining, though it ſhould be atteſted by a living witneſs to have been faithfully copied and compared with the original; which yet by the author's acknowlegement would be ſufficient in a court of judicature. It is manifeſt, that there would be more room to ſuſpect a fraud or impoſition in this caſe than in the other. As to what he alleges, that it is of much greater importance to guard againſt any miſtakes in the word of God than in any thing that relates to matters of private property, and that therefore as great or even greater precautions are neceſſary with regard to the former than the latter, it muſt be acknowleged, that if the revelation were of ſuch a nature, that it conſiſted in a ſingle preciſe point, as often is the caſe of a deed to be produced in evidence in a court of judicature, where a ſingle expreſſion or clauſe may determine the whole, and gain or loſe the cauſe, there might be ſome pretence for inſiſting on the ſtricteſt nicety of proofs, even as to all the ſeveral particular clauſes and forms of expreſſion, becauſe a ſingle miſtake might be of the worſt conſequence, and defeat the

the deſign of the whole. But it is manifeſt this is not the caſe with regard to the revelation contained in the holy Scriptures. The doctrines there taught, the precepts there injoined, the promiſes there made, the important facts there related, are ſo often repeated and referred to, and placed in ſuch various lights, that nothing leſs than a general corruption, which could not have been effected, could defeat the deſign for which that revelation was given. If a particular paſſage was altered or interpolated, ſtill there would be many others to preſerve to us the ſubſtance of that revelation, and to prevent the wrong uſe that might be attempted to be made of ſuch a paſſage. There is not therefore ſo ſcrupulous a nicety and exactneſs required in this caſe as in the other. The divine wiſdom hath ſo ordered it, that the revelation was originally contained in ſeveral writings, publiſhed by different perſons, and copies taken of them at different times, all confirming one another, and which render a general corruption of that revelation impracticable. The account of the facts there given is not confined to one book, nor are the articles of religion there mentioned, merely mentioned once for all, or drawn up in one form or ſyſtem, but the facts are ſo often referred to, and the articles or doctrines ſo often repeated, and delivered on ſo many different occaſions, that no miſtakes in particular paſſages, or in a particular copy or copies, could deſtroy the intent or uſe of the original revelation.

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It is with the ſame view of weakening and invalidating the evidence of Chriſtianity, that his Lordſhip is pleaſed to obſerve what hath been often urged by others of the Deiſtical Writers before him, that "the external evidence of "the Chriſtian revelation is diminiſhed by "time." This he repreſents as "ſo evident "that no divines would be ſo ridiculous as to "deny it *." And after ſeeming to grant, in a paſſage cited above, that the proof of Chriſtianity by miracles was ſufficient for the conviction of all thoſe who heard the publication of this doctrine, and ſaw the confirmation of it, he adds, that "this proof became in a little "time traditional and hiſtorical: And we "might be allowed to wonder how the effect "of it continued and increaſed too, as the "force of it diminiſhed, if the reaſons of this "phenomenon were not obvious in hiſtory †." As he has not thought fit to mention thoſe reaſons, no notice can be taken of them. But he ought not to have repreſented it as a thing which is univerſally acknowleged, that the external evidence of Chriſtianity is diminiſhed by time. The abſurdity of that maxim, That the certainty and credibility of moral evidence is continually diminiſhing in proportion to the length of time, has been often expoſed; particularly by Mr. *Ditton* in his Treatiſe on the reſurrection, Part II. The evidence of Chriſtianity hath in ſome reſpects increaſed, inſtead of being

* Vol IV. p. 269, 270. † Vol. V. p. 91.

dimi-

diminiſhed, ſince the firſt publication of it; eſ- LETTER
pecially the proofs ariſing from the wonderful XIV.
propagation of the Goſpel, contrary to all human appearance, notwithſtanding the amazing difficulties it had to encounter with; and from the accompliſhment of many remarkable predictions which they that lived in the firſt age of Chriſtianity could not ſee the completion of *. To talk of the proofs becoming *traditional* and *hiſtorical* may paſs with thoſe that govern themſelves by ſounds, as if the words *traditional* and *hiſtorical*, and *doubtful* and *uncertain*, were terms of the ſame ſignification; when every one knows, that many facts come to us by tradition and hiſtory with ſuch an evidence that no reaſonable man can doubt of them any more than of what he hears or ſees. He pronounceth indeed according to his manner with a deciſive tone, that "it was not poſſible, that "traditions derived from the firſt and through "the moſt early ages of Chriſtianity, ſhould "convey either facts or doctrines down with a "due authenticity and preciſion unleſs a conti-"nued miracle had ſubſiſted to alter the nature "of things, and to produce effects repugnant "to their cauſes †." This is very poſitively determined; but we have no proof of it but his own authority. And if it be underſtood not merely of facts or doctrines delivered down by moral tradition, which for the moſt part cannot

* This is fully ſhewn by Mr. Le Moine on Miracles, p. 252, 280. † Vol. IV. p. 398.

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be much depended upon, but of facts and doctrines contained in the ſacred writings, there is no real foundation for this aſſertion. We have proof ſufficient to convince any reaſonable perſon, as I have elſewhere ſhewn *, that thoſe writings were publiſhed in the firſt age of the Chriſtian Church, whilſt the apoſtles, and their immediate companions, the firſt publiſhers of Chriſtianity, were yet alive. In which age if any had attempted to corrupt thoſe writings in the accounts of doctrines and facts, ſuch an attempt muſt have been unavoidably detected and expoſed. And in the age immediately ſucceeding, thoſe writings became ſo generally diſperſed and known, ſo many copies of them were taken, and ſpread through different countries, they were had in ſuch veneration among Chriſtians, and ſo conſtantly read in their religious aſſemblies, that a general corruption of them would have been an impoſſible thing. Nor can any time be fixed upon from that age to this, in which ſuch a general corruption of them could have been accompliſhed: And all attempts to prove ſuch a corruption have been evidently vain and ridiculous, and have turned only to the confuſion of thoſe who have pretended it. As to what he urges about the falſe apoſtles and teachers in the firſt age, and their high pretenſions to revelations and extraordinary gifts, and the many ſects which were then formed;

* See Reflections on Lord Bolingbroke's Letters on the ſtudy and uſe of Hiſtory, p. 98, *et ſeq.*

and that though the apoſtles oppoſed them, "it LETTER. XIV.
"was often without effect, and always with
"great difficulty, as we may judge by that
"which St. *Paul* had to maintain his authority
"in the Church of *Corinth*, and others *."
This is ſo far from diminiſhing the original evidence of Chriſtianity, that it rather confirms it. Since the evidence brought for the true Chriſtian religion by the apoſtles and firſt publiſhers of it, muſt have been exceeding ſtrong and cogent, and their authority, which had nothing but the force of truth, and the atteſtations given to their divine miſſion, to ſupport it, muſt have been on a very ſolid baſis, which was able to overcome all thoſe complicated difficulties, ariſing from open enemies without, *Jews* and heathens, and from falſe brethren within, and the ſcandals and offences of the ſeveral ſects which ſprung up under various leaders, ſome of them perſons of great parts and ſubtilty, and who put on very ſpecious appearances. What ſtrong proofs of a divine original, and what a mighty energy muſt have accompanied genuine primitive Chriſtianity, by which it triumphed over all the apparently inſuperable difficulties and oppoſitions of all kinds, which it had to encounter with, even at its firſt appearance.

The propagation and eſtabliſhment of Chriſtianity, taking it in all its circumſtances, is indeed a moſt aſtoniſhing event, and has been always juſtly regarded as furniſhing an argument of

* Vol. IV. p. 398.

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great weight to prove its divine original, and the truth of the extraordinary facts and attestations by which it was confirmed. Lord *Bolingbroke* was sensible of this, and therefore has done what he could to take off the force of it, by endeavouring to account for the spreading of Christianity without any thing extraordinary or supernatural in the case. To this purpose he observes, that "indulgence to the *Jews* and to the Gentiles, "in order to gain both, was a fundamental prin"ciple of apostolical conduct from the first "preaching of the gospel: And that by such "prudent conduct the gospel was successively "propagated and converts flocked apace into "the pale of Christianity from these different "and opposite quarters *." He treats this, as if it were a piece of political conduct in St. *Paul* and the other apostles, in which they deviated from the original plan laid down by our Saviour himself. But this is a great mistake. The taking the *Jews* and Gentiles into the Christian Church, and uniting them both into one body, was part of the original plan of Christianity, which was evidently designed by the great author of our holy religion, in accomplishment of the glorious scheme formed by the divine wisdom from the beginning, and which had been clearly pointed out in the antient prophecies. But so far was the indulgence shewn to the Gentiles, and the incorporating them into the Christian Church along with the *Jews*,

* Vol. IV. p. 306.

from

from helping to bring the *Jews* into it, that it was one of the greateſt obſtacles to their entering into the pale of Chriſtianity, and raiſed in them ſtrong prejudices againſt it, which had ſo far poſſeſſed the minds even of the apoſtles, that it was with great difficulty, and by degrees, that they themſelves were brought to embrace this part of the Chriſtian ſcheme. Nor can it be ſuppoſed, that St. *Paul*, who had been educated in the ſchool of *Gamaliel*, and in the ſtricteſt Phariſaical notions, for which he was extremely zealous, would of himſelf have ever formed ſuch a ſcheme, in oppoſition to all his prejudices, if it had not been, as he himſelf affirms, communicated to him by a divine revelation, which came to him with an evidence that abſolutely convinced him, and overpowered all his prejudices. LETTER XIV.

With regard to the Gentiles, the taking them into the Chriſtian Church was only an admitting them into the body of thoſe who profeſſed the belief and acknowlegement of a crucified Saviour. And what was there in this to allure or engage them to forſake their antient religion, and thoſe ſuperſtitions and idolatries, to which they were ſo ſtrongly addicted? To tell the *Jews*, that they ſhould form one Church with the Gentiles, whom they looked upon with diſdain as utterly unworthy of ſuch a privilege: And to tell the Gentiles, that they ſhould form one Church with the *Jews*, for whoſe *religion and nation*, his Lordſhip obſerves, they had a

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contempt and averſion: And that they ſhould with them be reckoned among the diſciples of a crucified *Jeſus*; *i. e.* of a *Jew* that had been put to a cruel and ignominious death by the heads of his own nation; and whom they were to acknowlege for their Saviour and their Lord; could this poſſibly have been an inducement either to *Jews* or Gentiles to embrace Chriſtianity, which was ſo oppoſite to the prejudices of both, if it had not been for the conſpicuous evidences of a divine atteſtation accompanying it?

Another way he takes of accounting for the propagation of Chriſtianity is this: That "no "ages nor countries could be more prepared to "adopt every theological and metaphyſical no-"tion, even the moſt extravagant and leaſt in-"telligible, than that wherein the Chriſtian re-"ligion was firſt publiſhed and propagated *." And he frequently intimates, that the heathen philoſophy, eſpecially the *Platonic*, had greatly helped forward the ſpreading of the Chriſtian faith. If this had been the caſe, one would have expected, that the chief harveſt of converts to Chriſtianity, at its firſt appearance, would have been among the philoſophers and metaphyſicians, and thoſe who were bred up in their ſchools. But it is evident the fact was otherwiſe. No perſons were more generally averſe to the Chriſtian ſcheme, than the ſeveral ſects of philoſophers in the heathen world, who oppoſed it

* Vol. IV. p. 337.

with

with all the learning and ſubtilty they were ma- LETTER XIV.
ſters of. And indeed it was in ſome of its fundamental principles, directly oppoſite to their favourite notions and prejudices. Nor could it be expected, that they who valued themſelves ſo highly upon their learning, wiſdom, and eloquence, would ſubmit to be the diſciples of a crucified *Jeſus*, or learn their religion from ſuch perſons as the apoſtles were. The doctrine of ſalvation through Chriſt crucified, was *foolishneſs* to the proud *Greeks*, who pretended to ſeek *after wiſdom*, and was not agreeable to any of their ſchemes. And ſo far was St. *Paul*, the moſt learned of the apoſtles, from blending the Pagan philoſophy with the Chriſtian ſyſtem, which he preached, that he thought it neceſſary to warn the Chriſtian converts againſt it. *Beware leſt any man ſpoil you through philoſophy and vain deceit*, Col. xi. 8.

Another thing he mentions as having been a great advantage to the propagation of Chriſtianity was, that "great collections were made, "and every church had a common purſe. By "theſe means they ſupported their poor; and "every man who embraced Chriſtianity being "ſure not to want bread, the Goſpel was more "effectually propagated, and great numbers of "the loweſt rank of people were brought into "the pale *." One would be apt to think by his repreſentation, that the Chriſtians were for taking in all the poor that offered themſelves,

* Vol. IV. p. 422.

idle

LETTER XIV. idle persons who only wanted to be maintained, in order to gain a number of converts and proselytes. But this is a very wrong representation. Every one knows, that great care was taken in the admitting persons into the Christian Church. They were to have a good assurance both of their faith and of their morals. No idle poor were to be supported. On the contrary, they were discountenanced, and were treated as persons that *walked disorderly*. It was a constitution established by apostolical authority, as in the name of Christ, that if *any would not work, neither should he eat*; and that every man should *work with quietness*, and *eat his own bread*, and that he should *labour, working with his hands that which is good, that he might have to give to him that needeth*, 2 *Thes.* iii. 10, 11, 12. *Eph.* iv. 28. That spirit of charity and brotherly love which prevailed among the first Christians, was a noble effect of the Gospel of *Jesus*; and that which so opened their hearts and hands was the full conviction and persuasion they had of the truth and divinity of our holy religion. Thus *faith worked by love*. As to the reflections he makes upon their selling their possessions, and laying the money at the apostles feet, from whence he concludes, that *less than the whole would not satisfy the Church*, this and the case of *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, is considered in the remarks on *Chubb's* posthumous works in my former volume, p. 362, *et seq.*

to

to which I chuſe to refer rather than be guilty of unneceſſary repetitions. LETTER XIV.

It is a topic often inſiſted upon by the Deiſtical Writers, that revealed religion, particularly the Chriſtian revelation, has been of little or no advantage for promoting the reformation of mankind. Lord *Bolingbroke* ſeems to lay a particular ſtreſs upon this. He ſays, "It may be a "full anſwer to all that Dr. *Clarke* had advanced "againſt the heathen philoſophers, and their be"ing inſufficient for the inſtruction and refor"mation of mankind, to aſk, Whether that "reformation, which the heathen philoſophers "could not bring about effectually, has been "effected under the *Jewiſh* or Chriſtian diſ"penſation*?" What he ſaith concerning the effects of the *Jewiſh* diſpenſation hath been above conſidered; I ſhall here take notice of what he hath obſerved with regard to the effects of Chriſtianity. He aſſerteth, that "the world "hath not been effectually reformed, nor any "one nation in it, by the promulgation of the "Goſpel, even where Chriſtianity has flouriſhed "moſt †." And after mentioning the Chriſtian martyrs and ſaints, of whom he frequently ſpeaks with great contempt, he obſerves, that "as to holineſs and auſterity of life, that of "particular men, or of ſome particular orders "of men, will be far from proving the refor"mation of the world by Chriſtianity; ſince "there were formerly among the heathens

* Vol. V. p. 256. † *Ib.* p. 258.

"*Chal-*

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" *Chaldeans*, *Gymnoſophiſts*, and are now " among them and the *Mahometans*, inſtances " of as great or greater auſterity *." But he has not fairly repreſented the argument brought to prove the reformation of the world by Chriſtianity. In order to judge of this, it is neceſſary to conſider the ſtate of the world when Chriſtianity firſt appeared. Not only were the nations univerſally involved in the groſſeſt polytheiſm and idolatry, but never was there an age more immerſed in vice, and all manner of wickedneſs. The picture St. *Paul* draws of it, *Rom.* i. 21, 32. ſhocking as it ſeems to be, is a very juſt repreſentation of the general ſtate of the heathen world. But in proportion as the Goſpel prevailed, many myriads were *turned from idols to ſerve the living and true God*, brought from the moſt ſtupid idolatry to the pure adoration of the Deity, and from the moſt abominable vices to the practice of virtue and righteouſneſs. He himſelf acknowleges, that " our Saviour at his " coming found the whole world in a ſtate of " error concerning the firſt principle of natural " religion, *viz.* the unity and perfections of " God, though not of abſolute darkneſs; and " that the ſpreading of Chriſtianity has contri- " buted to deſtroy *polytheiſm* and *idolatry* †." And he obſerves, that " *Euſebius* in the firſt " book of his evangelical preparation, has given " a long catalogue of abſurd laws and cuſtoms, " contradictory to the law of nature in all ages

* Vol. V. p. 261, *et ſeq.* † Vol. IV. p. 243.

and

" and countries, for a very good purpoſe, to LETTER
" ſhew in ſeveral inſtances, how ſuch laws and XIV.
" cuſtoms as theſe have been reformed by the
" Goſpel *." He takes notice indeed of the faults there were among the firſt Chriſtian converts, for which the apoſtle reproves them; but it is manifeſt from many paſſages of the New Teſtament, that wonderful was the reformation which was then wrought in the religion and manners of men †. The primitive Chriſtians were, taking them generally, the moſt pious and virtuous body of men that ever appeared in the world. And though ſometimes the antient Chriſtian writers in the ardor of their zeal complain of the corruption and degeneracy that was growing among them, as *Cyprian* particularly has done, eſpecially in his book *De lapſis*, whoſe teſtimony our author more than once refers to, yet it appeareth from many paſſages in their writings, that the body of the Chriſtians was then remarkably diſtinguiſhed by the purity of their lives and manners from the Pagans. One of the topics they conſtantly inſiſt upon in their writings againſt the heathens, and in their apologies for Chriſtianity, is the mighty change that is wrought in the lives and manners of thoſe who embraced it. And though his Lordſhip banters *Lactantius* for the challenge he makes in a paſſage to which Dr. *Clarke* refers, yet this

* Vol. V. p. 100. † See 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.—Eph. iv. 18, 24.—Gal. v. 24.—1 Theſſ. i. 3, 9, 10.—Col. i. 6.—1 Pet. iv. 3, 4.

I think

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I think may be plainly concluded from it, that the good effects wrought by the Chriſtian religion in reforming thoſe who were converted to it, were ſo manifeſt, that their adverſaries themſelves were not able to deny it. And accordingly we have expreſs teſtimonies of the Pagan writers to this purpoſe. That of *Pliny* is very remarkable, and well known. And even *Julian* notwithſtanding all his prejudices, in his Epiſtle to *Arſacias*, recommends the purity and charity of the Chriſtians, and of their prieſts, to the imitation of the Pagans, and repreſents it as one cauſe of the progreſs Chriſtianity had made: Though no doubt they were then degenerated from what they had been in the firſt ages. As to the preſent ſtate of the Chriſtian world, his Lordſhip thinks, "it will not be "ſaid, that luxury and debauchery have been "reſtrained by Chriſtianity. Where is the "court or city in which Chriſtianity is pro-"feſſed, to which that phraſe might not be "applied, *Daphnicis moribus vivere?*" But there needs little obſervation to convince us, that the corruption and diſſoluteneſs he ſpeaks of is chiefly to be found among thoſe who have little more of Chriſtianity than the name, and who are in reality indifferent to all religion. And if the reſtraints of the Chriſtian religion were removed, the corruption would certainly be much greater and more general than it is. Many thouſands who would otherwiſe be very corrupt and diſſolute, are engaged by the motives

tives and precepts of Chriſtianity to lead a ſober, a righteous, and godly life. A real Chriſtian walking according to the rules of the Goſpel, and I doubt not that notwithſtanding the corruption complained of, there are ſtill great numbers of ſuch, forms a far more complete and excellent character for virtue taken in its juſt extent, as comprehending rational piety and devotion, an extenſive benevolence, and exemplary purity of manners, than is to be found among the moſt admired Pagans. And indeed Chriſtians are taught to keep themſelves pure from ſeveral practices which the heathens ſcarce looked upon to be any crimes at all. As to what he mentions of the *cruel wars, perſecutions, and maſſacres*, among Chriſtians, he himſelf acknowleges, that *no part of this ought to be aſcribed to the Goſpel*, nor can be *reconciled to the principles of it**. The moſt effectual way therefore of promoting real piety, virtue, and charity, would be to endeavour to engage men to a cloſer adherence to the doctrines, and laws of Chriſtianity, and inſtead of ſetting them looſe from its ſacred reſtraints, to enforce its important motives upon their hearts and conſciences. LETTER XIV.

I need not take any particular notice of what his Lordſhip hath offered againſt the Chriſtian revelation drawn from its not having been univerſally publiſhed in all nations and ages †. The chief force of what he hath urged depends upon this ſuppoſition, that according to the Goſpel, all

* Vol. V. p. 264. † Concerning this objection ſee the former volume, p. 30, 35.

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thoſe ſhall be damned, that do not believe in Chriſt, whether ever they heard of him or not, *damned*, as he expreſſes it, *even in their involuntary ignorance* *; which is expreſly contrary to the tenor of St. *Paul*'s reaſoning in the ſecond chapter of the Epiſtle to the *Romans*. The declarations made in the Goſpel of the neceſſity of believing in Chriſt, and the puniſhment of thoſe who do not believe, plainly relate to thoſe who have an opportunity of being acquainted with the Chriſtian revelation. I ſhall only farther obſerve, that whereas it has been often urged by the advocates for Chriſtianity, that it appears from the analogy of the divine procedure, that God may in a conſiſtence with his wiſdom and goodneſs, grant to ſome men and ſome nations much greater helps and means for knowlege and moral improvement than to others, our author hath no way of avoiding this, but by boldly aſſerting, in contradiction to manifeſt fact and experience, that all men have the *ſame means* †; which is a-kin to another extraordinary aſſertion of his, that *there never was a time when it could be juſtly ſaid, that the law of nature was imperfectly known* ‡. Tho' he himſelf frequently repreſents the greater part of mankind as having been ignorant for many ages together of what he owns to be the great fundamental principle of that law. And it is to be obſerved, that after having ſaid in the paſſage juſt now referred to, that all men have the

* Vol. V. p. 295. † *Ib.* p. 294. ‡ *Ib.* p. 202.

ſame

same means, he soon after declares, that "they "shall be accountable for no more than they "had capacities or means of knowing:" Which plainly supposes that they all have not the same means and advantages, but that there will not be as much required of those who had less advantages, as of those who had greater; which the friends of the Christian revelation will readily allow.

I shall conclude this Letter with mentioning a passage which is undoubtedly intended by the author to expose Christianity. He observes, that "natural law is founded in reason; but "Christianity is founded in faith; and faith "proceeds from grace; and whether a man "shall have grace or no, depends not on him *." This is a way of talking usual with those who laugh both at faith and grace. His Lordship is pleased on some other occasions to make mention of divine grace; but always in a way of ridicule. The notion of divine assistance has nothing in it but what is agreeable to reason, and to the sentiments of some of the best and wisest men in all ages. And he himself, even where he treats it as a vain and groundless notion, yet thinks fit to own, that our not being able to explain how it operates, is no just objection against it; and that a well attested revelation is a sufficient ground for believing that such a thing there is †. And to our unspeakable satisfaction we are assured by the Christian revelation, that God is ready on his part to communicate his gra-

* Vol. V. p. 93. † Vol III. p 488.

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cious aids to thoſe that humbly apply to him for them, and are at the ſame time diligent in the uſe of their own endeavours. The writer here ſuppoſes faith to be oppoſed to reaſon; and that Chriſtianity is not founded on reaſon, but on faith as oppoſed to it. But faith, if it be of the right kind, always ſuppoſes that there is a good reaſon for believing. We are not to believe without reaſon, nor againſt it. Chriſtianity is founded on rational evidence. The proof of the Chriſtian law, ariſing both from the external evidences and atteſtations given to it; and from the internal characters of goodneſs and purity, and the excellent tendency of the whole, is ſuch as is proper to convince the reaſon and judgment: And it has actually had that effect upon many of the ableſt perſons in all ages ever ſince it was firſt promulgated.

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Objections againſt the laws and doctrines of Chriſtianity conſidered. The Scripture precepts not delivered in a formal code or ſyſtem, but in a way that is really more uſeful, and they comprehend all the duties of morality. Concerning our Saviour's precepts in his ſermon on the mount. The Goſpel-law with reſpect to polygamy and divorces not contrary to reaſon and nature, but wiſe and excellent. The Chriſtian doctrine of a Mediator, and of our redemption by the blood of Chriſt vindicated againſt his injurious repreſentation of it. It gives worthy ideas of God, and ſhews the divine perfections in their proper harmony. It is full of comfort to good men, but gives no encouragement to the obſtinately wicked and preſumptuous. It is not contrary to reaſon, though it could not have been diſcovered by it. This doctrine not owing to the pride of the human heart. Traces of the doctrine of the Trinity to be found, according to Lord Bolingbroke, *in all the antient Theiſtical philoſophers.*

SIR,

HAVING in my laſt letter conſidered what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered with regard to the Chriſtian revelation in general, and

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its evidences, I now proceed to examine his objections againſt the laws and doctrines of Chriſtianity.

With reſpect to the laws of Chriſtianity, he obſerves, that "Chriſt did not reveal an entire "body of ethics——That the Goſpel does not "contain a code reaching to all the duties of "life.——That moral obligations are only oc"caſionally recommended—And that if all the "precepts ſcattered about thro' the whole New "Teſtament, were collected and put together "in the very words of the ſacred writers, they "would compoſe a very ſhort as well as uncon"nected ſyſtem of ethics: And that a ſyſtem "thus collected from the writings of heathen "moraliſts would be more full, more entire, "and coherent*." But it muſt be conſidered that the New Teſtament ſuppoſes and confirms the authority of the Old. And out of both together might be compiled a much more complete body of ethics, than out of all the writings of the antient philoſophers and moraliſts, which would be found defective in ſome duties of great conſequence, as was obſerved before, Letter X. p. 246, 247. They are not indeed delivered in a philoſophical way; and Lord *Bolingbroke* himſelf owns, that "this does not "take off from the dignity, the authority, or "the utility, even in moral doctrines, of re"vealed religion.——Since revelation was not "given to convince men of the reaſonableneſs

* Vol. IV. p. 297.

"of

" of morality—by arguments drawn from " the reaſon of things—but to inforce the " practice of it by a ſuperior authority *." They are urged in the name of God, and as his laws. They are not wrought up into a formal code, and delivered merely once for all in a ſyſtem; but they are delivered in various ways, and on different occaſions, often in plain and expreſs precepts; at other times by alluſions, parables, and compariſons, recommended by excellent examples, and inforced by motives of the higheſt importance, by divine promiſes and threatenings. And what ſhews their great uſefulneſs and excellency, though they ſeem to be delivered occaſionally, yet it is ſo ordered, that not one duty of conſequence is omitted in the holy Scriptures. All the duties of morality are there frequently repeated and inculcated, and variouſly inforced.

His Lordſhip owns, that " our Saviour's ſermon on the mount contains, no doubt, many " excellent precepts of morality." And if ſome of them ſeem too ſublime, he thinks the ſame reaſon may be given for them that *Tully* gives for the ſeverer doctrines of the *Stoics*. That " men will always ſtop ſhort of that pitch of " virtue which is propoſed in them; and it is " therefore right to carry the notions of it as " high as poſſible," p. 298, 299. He farther obſerves, that ſome of Chriſt's precepts " were " fit and proper enough for a religious ſect or

* Vol. IV. p. 297.

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"order of men, like the *Eſſenes*, and might "be properly enough exacted from thoſe who "were Chriſt's companions, and diſciples in a "ſtricter ſenſe; but conſidered as general du-"ties are impracticable, inconſiſtent with na-"tural inſtinct as well as law, and quite de-"ſtructive of ſociety*." It is acknowleged, that ſome of Chriſt's precepts were not deſigned to be of univerſal obligation at all times, and to all his diſciples, but were directed to particular perſons, and were only to take place on extraordinary occaſions. Such was that which he mentions of ſelling all and following Chriſt. But it does not appear that in any of our Saviour's precepts he had any view to the *Eſſenes*, who are not once mentioned in the whole Goſpel. But as to other precepts which this writer mentions, and which are contained in the ſermon on the mount, and directed to all the diſciples, as that concerning the not reſiſting evil, the taking no thought for the morrow, the laying up treaſures not on earth but in heaven: Theſe precepts, which are delivered in a conciſe proverbial way, taken in the true ſenſe and intention of them, are of great and general uſe, as deſigned to reſtrain a malevolent revengeful ſpirit, anxious diſtracting cares, and an inordinate love of worldly riches. Theſe and other precepts Mr. *Chubb* had endeavoured to expoſe, and I ſhall refer to the remarks that are made in

* Vol. IV. p. 300.

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the beginning of the thirteenth letter of my former volume, p. 325, *et ſeq.* LETTER XV.

Among the precepts of Chriſtianity may be reckoned thoſe relating to polygamy and divorces. Our author looks upon a prohibition of polygamy to be a prohibition of what the law of nature permits in the fulleſt manner, and even requires too on ſeveral occaſions: Concerning which ſee what was obſerved above, Letter IX. p. 225, 226. As to divorces, he declares that "with them monogamy may be "thought a reaſonable inſtitution: Without "them it is an unnatural, abſurd, and cruel im-"poſition: That it croſſes the intention of na-"ture, and ſtands in oppoſition to the moſt ef-"fectual means of multiplying the human ſpe-"cies‡." He ſeems very much to approve the law of *Moſes* for allowing polygamy and divorces, and to think it in this inſtance much more reaſonable and conformable to the law of nature than Chriſtianity is. But he has not fairly repreſented the *Moſaical* doctrine concerning divorces. He ſays, "the legal cauſes for "divorces had a great latitude," among which he reckons this for one, "becauſe the husband "found another woman whom he thought "handſomer, or whom it was more convenient "for him to marry." Where he repreſents it, as if theſe were *legal cauſes of divorce, i.e.* cauſes ſpecified in the original law itſelf: Which is not true. It was only a corrupt gloſs of ſome

‡ Vol. V. p. 163.

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of the *Jewiſh* doctors, who in this as well as other inſtances perverted the deſign of the original law. There is no expreſs mention of divorces in the *Jewiſh* ſacred hiſtory after the law made concerning this matter, till they are occaſionally mentioned by *Iſaiah* and *Jeremiah*. In the latter times of the *Jewiſh* ſtate divorces ſeem to have been more frequent, and for ſlighter cauſes: Though even then there were many among the *Jews*, who oppoſed the looſe interpretation of that law given by others of their doctors. This writer mentions "the differences between the ſchools of *Hillel* and *Sammeas* about divorces: And that Chriſt decided in favour of the latter, and ſpecified but "one kind of turpitude as a juſt cauſe of divorce*." And in this he plainly lets us know he thinks our Saviour was in the wrong. And he goes on to ſay in a ſneering way, that "the "law of grace was ſuperior in time to the natural and *Moſaical* law among Chriſtians†." What follows is mean boaſts, mixed with a ſcandalous inſinuation againſt the chaſtity of the Bleſſed Virgin, becauſe *Joſeph* had thoughts of divorcing her, *having ſuſpected her to have been got with child before her marriage*. This he produces as an *anecdote* from *Juſtin Martyr*, as if it were a piece of ſecret hiſtory, when every one that has read the Goſpel knows, that the Evangeliſt both mentions the ſuſpicion, and ſhews how cauſeleſs it was, and how it was removed, *Matthew* i. 18-24.

* Vol. V. p. 170. † *Ib.* p. 171.

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He expreſly calls polygamy and divorces *inſtitutions which have reaſon and revelation on their ſide*. Where he ſeems willing to allow for a while that the *Moſaical* law was from God, that he may draw a patronage from thence for polygamy and divorces: And he ſpeaks of them as if they were poſitive *inſtitutions* expreſly preſcribed and injoined in that law as by divine authority. But this is not fairly repreſented. They were at beſt barely permitted. Polygamy is nowhere expreſly allowed, much leſs commanded in the law of *Moſes*. But there are ſeveral things that plainly imply a diſapprobation of it. As particularly the account there given of God's having at the firſt creation formed one woman for one man, and appointed that there ſhould be an inſeparable union between them, and that they *ſhould be one fleſh*. And though *Moſes* gives inſtances of polygamy among ſome of the patriarchs, they are ſo circumſtanced as to make a very diſadvantageous repreſentation of that practice, and the conſequences of it. The utmoſt that can be ſaid is, that it is not expreſly prohibited in that law. And there are ſome wiſe regulations added, which indeed ſuppoſe it to be what was then practiſed, but ſeem plainly deſigned to diſcourage it, and to correct and reſtrain the abuſes which it tended to produce. See *Exod.* xxi. 9, 10. *Deut.* xxi. 15, 16, 17. The law about divorces, *Deut.* xxiv. 1-4. ſpecifies *ſome matter of uncleanneſs* as the cauſe of divorce, which ſome

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of the *Jewish* doctors themſelves, particularly the *Caraites* who keep cloſe to the letter of the law, underſtand of adultery, or at leaſt of ſome immodeſt and unchaſte behaviour. And *Moſes* ſuppoſes the woman that was divorced to be *defiled* by a ſecond marriage, and therefore ordains that the firſt husband ſhould never have it in his power to take her again: Which was manifeſtly intended to diſcourage that practice. Our Saviour indeed ſaith, that *Moſes ſuffered it for the hardneſs of their hearts*, *Mat.* xix. 8. This our author is pleaſed to repreſent, as if Chriſt maintained, that "God tolerated ſuperſtitious practices, or permitted even crimes to "have the ſanction of his law, becauſe of the "hardneſs of their hearts*." But to this may be applied the diſtinction which he himſelf mentions, and ſeems to approve, made by the Civilians, "between a *plenary* and *leſs plenary* "*permiſſion*, one of which gives a right to do, "and the other exempts from puniſhment for "doing†." It is the latter kind of permiſſion which was given to polygamy and divorces, and which our Saviour refers to when he talks of their being ſuffered to do it for the hardneſs of their hearts: Not as if it was what God countenanced and approved, but they were ſo far ſuffered to do it as not to incur a legal penalty by doing it: But when he ſent his well-beloved Son to bring the cleareſt and moſt perfect ſcheme of religion, this practice was more plainly prohibited

* Vol. V. p. 170. † *Ib.* p. 151. 174.

than it had been before. And this inſtead of being a juſt objection againſt the Chriſtian law is a proof of its great excellency; which has hereby provided for preſerving to both ſexes their juſt rights, for ſtrengthening the union between the married pair which it is of great importance to ſtrengthen and improve, for uniting the care of both parents in the education of children, for maintaining the peace and order of families, and for reſtraining an unbounded diſſoluteneſs and licentiouſneſs. Whereas the contrary practice of polygamy and frequent divorces has a tendency to reduce one half of the human ſpecies to a miſerable ſervitude, and to deprive them of their natural rights, to produce the moſt bitter jealouſies and diſtractions in families, and to hinder the orderly education of children. It gives occaſion to unnatural mutilations, and lets the reins looſe to a licentious appetite. I ſhall only farther obſerve, that an author whom no man will ſuſpect of being prejudiced in favour of the Chriſtian law, has in an injurious Eſſay, upon conſidering and comparing what may be ſaid for and againſt polygamy and divorces, ſhewn that the law forbidding them is founded upon better reaſons, and more for the general good of mankind, and order of ſociety, than the contrary. See Mr. *Hume's moral and political Eſſays.* Eſſay XXII. on polygamy and divorces.

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As to the doctrines of Chriſtianity, that of Chriſt being the mediator between God and man, and of our redemption by his blood, are evidently

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The doctrine of a Mediator in general he represents as unreasonable and absurd and as having been originally derived from the heathens. He says, "the doctrine of a mediator between "God and man was established in the heathen "theology, and the Christians held a mediation "likewise. But the former seem the most ex"cusable. For the Christian believes that he "may have access at all times to the throne of "grace. But the poor heathen, filled with a "religious horror, durst not approach the di"vine Monarch except through the mediation "of his ministers*." And again, among the extravagant hypotheses of the Pagans, he reckons their notions of mediators and intercessors with God on the behalf of mankind, of atonement and expiation ‖. That the heathens had some notion of the necessity of a mediator or mediators between God and man is very true, which might be owing both to the natural sense they had of their own guilt and unworthiness compared with the infinite majesty, greatness and purity, of the Supreme Being, and to some traditions originally derived from extraordinary revelation. But this, like other articles of the antient primitive religion, became greatly cor-

* Vol. IV. p. 81. ‖ *Ib.* p. 372, 373.

rupted,

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rupted, and gave occaſion to much ſuperſtition and confuſion in their worſhip. But in the Chriſtian ſcheme this doctrine is ſet in a clear and noble light. The Chriſtian indeed believes, as this writer hath obſerved, that he hath acceſs at all times to the throne of grace; but he alſo believes that it is through the great Mediator whom God hath in his infinite wiſdom and goodneſs appointed that he hath freedom of acceſs. And nothing can give a more amiable idea of the Supreme Being, or have a greater tendency to ſtrengthen our hope and affiance in him, than to conſider him as a *God in Chriſt reconciling the world unto himſelf*, and as having appointed his well-beloved Son, a perſon of infinite dignity as the great and only Mediator, through whom he is pleaſed to communicate the bleſſings of his grace to ſinners of the human race, and in whoſe name they are to offer up their prayers and praiſes to him the Father of mercies, and the God of love. It is impoſſible to prove that there is any thing in ſuch a conſtitution unworthy of the ſupreme and infinitely Perfect Being. And if we are aſſured by a well-atteſted revelation, that this is the order appointed by God in his ſovereign wiſdom, it ought to be received and improved with the higheſt thankfulneſs. And it nearly imports thoſe to whom this revelation is made known, to take care that they do not reject the grace and mercy of God; and his offered ſalvation, by refuſing to accept it in that way which he himſelf

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himſelf hath thought fit to appoint. If this be a divine conſtitution, and we are as ſure that it is ſo as that the Goſpel is true, they are not chargeable with a ſlight guilt, who inſtead of making a proper uſe of it, and taking the advantage it is fitted to yield, preſume to cavil at it, and raſhly to arraign the proceedings of the ſupreme wiſdom and goodneſs, in a caſe of which they cannot poſſibly pretend to be competent judges.

With reſpect to the doctrine of redemption, which, he obſerves from Dr. *Clarke*, is a *main and fundamental article of the Chriſtian faith*, he takes upon him to pronounce that "the utmoſt endeavours have been and always muſt "be employed in vain, to reduce the entire plan "of the divine wiſdom in the miſſion of Chriſt, "and the redemption of man, to a coherent, "intelligible, and reaſonable ſcheme of doctrines and facts‡." And it is the intire deſign of the thirty-ſixth and thirty-ſeventh of his Fragments and Eſſays, to expoſe that doctrine, and to anſwer what Dr. *Clarke* had offered to ſhew that there is nothing in it contrary to reaſon†.

He obſerves that "the fall of man lies at the "foundation of the doctrine of redemption, "and that the account of it is irreconcileable to "every idea we have of the wiſdom, juſtice, and "goodneſs, to ſay nothing of the dignity, of "the Supreme Being‖." I need not add any

‡ Vol. IV. p. 318. † Vol. V. p. 279, *et ſeq.* ‖ *Ib.* p. 283, 284.

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thing here to what has been already offered on that ſubject in my thirteenth letter. The great corruption of mankind has been acknowleged by the moſt diligent obſervers in all ages; and great is the guilt and miſery they have thereby incurred. And it is no way reaſonable to ſuppoſe that this was the original ſtate of the human nature. The redemption of mankind is a proviſion made by infinite wiſdom and goodneſs for recovering them from the corruption into which they had fallen, and the guilt they had incurred, and for reſtoring them to righteouſneſs and true holineſs, and even raiſing them to everlaſting felicity, in ſuch a way as is moſt conſiſtent with the honour of God's government, and of his illuſtrious moral excellencies. And if there be ſome things relating to the methods of our redemption which we are not well able diſtinctly to explain or comprehend, it is not to be wondered at, conſidering that theſe are things of a high nature, and which depend upon the determinations and councils of the divine wiſdom, of which without his revelation of them we cannot aſſume to be proper judges. LETTER XV.

There are two queſtions here proper to be conſidered; one concerning expiation in general; the other concerning that particular method of expiation held forth to us in the Goſpel, by the death and ſufferings of Jeſus Chriſt, as a ſacrifice for the ſins of the world.

As to the general queſtion, it can ſcarce be reaſonably denied, that if we conſider God as the

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If it be alledged, that repentance alone is a ſufficient expiation: Not to repeat what hath been already offered on this head in the eleventh Letter, p. 253, 254, it may be demanded whether God could in ſtrict juſtice puniſh ſinners for their tranſgreſſions of his laws, and for the crimes they have committed? If he could, it is becauſe thoſe tranſgreſſions and crimes really deſerve puniſhment. If thoſe crimes deſerve puniſhment, it muſt be an act of free ſovereign grace and mercy to remit or not to inflict the deſerved penalty. And as it is an act of ſovereignty, it muſt depend upon what ſhall ſeem fit to the Supreme and Infinitely Wiſe and Perfect Mind to determine upon a full view of what is beſt and propereſt upon the whole. And are we ſo well acquainted with what the Infinite Majeſty oweth to himſelf, and what the greateſt

good of the moral world doth require, as to take upon us poſitively to determine a thing in which the divine authority and prerogatives, and the reaſon of his government are ſo nearly concerned? Upon what foundation can we pretend to be ſure, that the great Governor of the world is obliged to pardon ſinners at all times and in all caſes, barely and immediately upon their repentance, and even to crown their imperfect obedience, though attended with many failures and defects, with the glorious reward of eternal life? And if no man can pretend without an inexcuſable raſhneſs and ignorance to be ſure of this, who can take upon him to determine, what expiation or ſatisfaction for ſin, beſides the repentance of the ſinner, the moſt wiſe and righteous Governor of the world may ſee fit to inſiſt upon? This, if any thing, ſeems to be a proper ſubject for divine revelation. LETTER XV.

Dr. *Clarke* had argued, as his Lordſhip obſerves, that the "cuſtom of ſacrifices which univerſally obtained ſhews it to have been the "general ſenſe of mankind, that ſome expi"ation was neceſſary for ſin, and that God "would not be appeaſed without ſome puniſh"ment and ſatisfaction *." Our author ſpeaks of this way of arguing with great contempt.

He ſays, that "the moſt abſurd notions which "ſuperſtition ever ſpread in contradiction to the "law of nature and reaſon, are applied to the "proceedings of God with man." But ſince it

* Vol. V. p. 286.

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is a matter of fact which cannot be denied, that the offering ſacrifices to God was one of the moſt antient external rites of religion of which we have any account; ſince it obtained early and univerſally, not only among polytheiſts and idolaters, but among the moſt religious adorers of the one true God; this naturally leadeth us to conclude, that it was a part of the primitive religion originally enjoined to the firſt anceſtors of the human race, and from them tranſmitted to their deſcendants. Upon any other ſuppoſition it is hard to conceive, how men ſhould come ſo univerſally to look upon the taking away the life of a beaſt, to be well pleaſing in the ſight of God, and an acceptable piece of divine worſhip. The beſt way of accounting for this ſeems to be that it was a ſacred rite of divine appointment, which was originally intended for wiſe and valuable purpoſes; *viz.* to impreſs men's minds with a ſenſe of the evil and demerit of ſin, and to be an acknowlegement on the part of the ſinner that his ſins deſerved puniſhment. And at the ſame time to be a pledge and token of God's being willing to receive an atonement, and of his pardoning grace and mercy. And ſince it appears to have been an original part of the divine ſcheme, that God would ſend his Son into the world in the fulneſs of time to ſuffer and die for the redemption of mankind, in whoſe blood that covenant was founded, by virtue of which good men in all ages were to be ſaved upon their repentance, and

ſincere though imperfect obedience; then ſup- LETTER
poſing that ſome diſcovery of this was made to XV.
the firſt parents of the human race after their apoſtaſy as a foundation for their hope and comfort; this gives a moſt reaſonable account of the inſtitution of ſuch a ſacred rite; than which nothing could be better fitted to keep up a notion and expectation of a ſuffering Redeemer, and to be a conſtant memorial to them both of their own guilt and of the divine mercy. And hence thoſe ſacrifices were very properly accompanied with prayers, confeſſions of ſin, and thankſgivings, and were regarded as federal rites, and tokens of friendſhip and reconciliation between God and man. But this like other parts of the primitive religion became corrupted. The true original deſign of ſacrifices was forgotten and loſt, though the external rite ſtill continued; and they were looked upon as in themſelves and of their own nature properly expiatory.

Our way is now prepared to conſider the queſtion as it relates particularly to that method of expiation, which is held forth to us in the Goſpel by the ſufferings and death of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, a Mediator of infinite dignity. And with regard to this he urgeth, that "our notions "of God's moral attributes will lead us to think, "that God would be ſatisfied more agreeably "to his mercy and goodneſs without any ex- "piation upon the repentance of the offenders, "and more agreeably to his juſtice with any

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"other expiation rather than this*." In oppoſition to this, it may be affirmed, that ſuppoſing an expiation to have been neceſſary on the behalf of ſinful men, none can be conceived more worthy, or more valuable, or more capable of anſwering the moſt excellent ends, than that which is ſet before us in the Goſpel.

We are there taught, that upon a foreſight of man's apoſtacy, and the miſeries and ruins to which the human race would be expoſed by their iniquities and tranſgreſſions, God had in his infinite wiſdom and grace determined to provide a Saviour for recovering them from their guilt and miſery to holineſs and happineſs: And that it was appointed in the divine councils that this Saviour ſhould, in order to the accompliſhing this great deſign, take upon him human fleſh, and ſhould not only bring a clear revelation of the divine will to mankind, and exhibit a moſt perfect example of univerſal holineſs, goodneſs, and purity, but that he ſhould on the behalf of ſinful men, and to make atonement for their offences, ſubmit to undergo the moſt grievous ſufferings and death: That accordingly in that ſeaſon which ſeemed fitteſt to the divine wiſdom, God ſent his own well-beloved Son into the world, a perſon of infinite dignity, upon this moſt gracious and benevolent purpoſe and deſign: That this glorious perſon actually took upon him our nature, and lived and converſed among men here on earth: That he brought

* Vol. V. p. 286.

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the moſt perfect diſcoveries of the divine will that had been ever made to mankind, for inſtructing them in thoſe things which it was of the higheſt importance to them to know: That in his ſacred life and practice he exhibited all the beauties of holineſs, and yielded the moſt perfect obedience to the divine law, which he exemplified in the dignity of its authority and in the excellency of its precepts: That beſides this, prompted by his own generous love to mankind, and in obedience to the divine appointment, he voluntarily ſubmitted for our ſakes to the deepeſt humiliations and abaſements, and the moſt dolorous agonies and paſſions, followed by a moſt cruel and ignominious death, that he might obtain eternal redemption for us. He ſuffered for ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us unto God. By theſe his ſufferings and obedience on our behalf, which was infinitely pleaſing in the ſight of God, he became the propitiation for the ſins of the world, and did that in reality which the ſacrifices could only do in type and figure. And on the account of what he hath done and ſuffered on the behalf of ſinful men, God has been graciouſly pleaſed to promiſe to grant a full and free pardon of all their ſins upon their ſincere repentance, to communicate to them through this great Mediator the bleſſings of his grace, and to crown their ſincere though imperfect obedience with the glorious reward of eternal life. That accordingly that ſuffering Saviour having

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LETTER XV. by himſelf purged our ſins was raiſed again from the dead, and crowned with glory and honour: That he now appears for guilty men as their great advocate and interceſſor: And is conſtituted the great diſpenſer of thoſe ſpiritual bleſſings which he had by the divine appointment procured for us, and is the author of eternal ſalvation to them that obey him.

This is one illuſtrious inſtance of what our author declares, that *the theology of the Goſpel is marvellous.* It could only have been known by divine revelation: And now that it is diſcovered to us, it calls for our higheſt admiration, and thankfulneſs.

Let us now conſider the objections he hath urged againſt it.

He repreſents it as abſurd to ſuppoſe, that "God ſent his only-begotten Son who had not "offended him, to be ſacrificed for men who "had offended him, that he might expiate their "ſins, and ſatisfy his own anger ‡." As to God's ſending his own Son to be the Saviour of ſinful men, to redeem them from miſery and ruin, and to raiſe them to eternal life, it cannot reaſonably be denied, that the more glorious and wonderful the perſon was, and the greater his dignity, the better was he fitted for accompliſhing the great work to which he was deſigned; and the greater value it derived to the obedience he yielded, and the ſufferings he endured on our behalf. This writer obſerves, that "the

‡ Vol. V. p. 286.

"means

"f means of reconciling all ſinners to an offended LETTER. XV.
"Deity were made by the Pagan theology ex-
"tremely eaſy."——And he particularly inſtances in expiatory ſacrifices †. But no ſuch thing can be juſtly objected againſt the doctrine of our redemption by the blood of Chriſt. It is certainly of the higheſt importance to mankind, that they ſhould not entertain too ſlight thoughts of the evil of ſin, or look upon it as too eaſy a matter to obtain the favour of God when they had offended him, or imagine that his juſt diſpleaſure againſt ſin may be averted by trivial expedients. All this is effectually provided againſt in the Goſpel ſcheme. The expiation in this caſe is ſuppoſed to be effected by a ſacrifice of infinite virtue, not to be equalled or repeated. This gives the moſt effectual conviction, that it is not a ſlight or trifling matter, to atone for the ſins of men, and to offer ſuch an expiation as is ſuited to the majeſty of God to accept. No man that believes this can poſſibly entertain ſlight thoughts of the evil and demerit of ſin. It tendeth to fill us with the moſt awful reverential conceptions of the infinite majeſty of the Supreme Being, his righteouſneſs and purity, and the inviolable regard he hath to the authority of his government and laws.

As to the other part of the objection, that it is abſurd to ſuppoſe, that "the Son of God who "had not offended ſhould be ſacrificed for men

† Vol. V. p. 210.

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" who had offended him:" The truth is, that if he had not been perfectly innocent and holy, he could not have been properly fitted to expiate the ſins of men. Had he been himſelf guilty and a ſinner, inſtead of making an atonement for the ſins of others, he muſt have been puniſhed for his own. Nor could his oblation have been of ſuch value and merit as to be proper for anſwering the great ends for which it was deſigned. If it be ſtill objected, that it is unjuſt and cruel that an innocent perſon ſhould be puniſhed for the guilty: I anſwer that it will be allowed, that if the evils and ſufferings the guilty had incurred by their crimes, ſhould by the mere arbitrary act and authority of the ſupreme ruling power, be laid on an innocent perſon without and againſt his own conſent, this would be contrary to all the rules both of goodneſs and juſtice; and would be a confounding the whole order of things. But this is far from being the caſe. The ſufferings of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt were not arbitrarily impoſed upon him by the mere authority of God. He himſelf freely undertook the great work of our redemption. He conſented to undergo theſe temporary ſufferings for the moſt valuable ends, for promoting the glory of God, and the ſalvation of mankind. The admitting him therefore to ſuffer on our behalf, was not doing him any injuſtice, but giving him an opportunity of performing the moſt wonderful act of obedience, and exhibiting the moſt aſtoniſhing inſtance of love

love and goodneſs towards perishing ſinners, LETTER XV.
from whence according to the divine compact and covenant, the moſt glorious benefits were to redound to the human race; and he himſelf was to be recompenſed with the higheſt glory in that nature which he aſſumed. It is no hard matter therefore to anſwer the queſtion our author puts, "Whether the truth of that maxim, that "it is not equally fit that an innocent perſon "ſhould be extremely miſerable, as that he "ſhould be free from ſuch miſery, the inno-"cence of the Lamb of God, and the ſufferings "and ignominious death of Chriſt, can be re-"conciled together, and how *?" That Chriſt endured the moſt grievous ſufferings, and was put to a moſt cruel and ignominious death, and conſequently that in his caſe a perſon perfectly innocent was expoſed to the greateſt ſufferings, is a matter of fact which cannot be denied. And it cannot reaſonably be pretended, that it renders thoſe ſufferings more unjuſt, that he ſhould ſuffer on the account of ſinful men, to make atonement for their ſins, and to procure for them the moſt valuable bleſſings, than if he had endured thoſe ſufferings without any ſuch view at all. The ſufferings of a moſt holy and righteous perſon are perfectly reconcileable to all the rules of juſtice, and to the order and reaſon of things, provided thoſe ſufferings are what he himſelf hath voluntarily undertaken, and that they anſwer a moſt valuable and excellent end

* Vol. V. p. 288.

for

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for the public good, and that the ſuffering perſon himſelf afterwards receives a glorious recompence. And according to the account given us in the Goſpel, all theſe circumſtances concurred in the ſufferings of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

Dr. *Clarke* had mentioned ſome of the excellent ends, which the ſufferings and death of Chriſt were deſigned and fitted to anſwer. Such as, that this method "tends to diſcountenance "and prevent preſumption, to diſcourage men "from repeating their tranſgreſſions, to give "them a deep ſenſe of the heinous nature of "ſin, and to convince them of the excellency "and importance of the laws of God, and the "indiſpenſable neceſſity of paying obedience "to them ‖." Lord *Bolingbroke* has not offered any argument to prove that redemption by the death of Chriſt was not well fitted to anſwer theſe ends, but in his dictatorial manner has pronounced, that "the prudential reaſons aſ-"ſigned by Dr. *Clarke* for the death of Chriſt, "would appear futile and impertinent, if ap-"plied to human councils; but in their ap-"plication to the divine, they became profane "and impious——That the death of Chriſt, "inſtead of being proper to diſcountenance "preſumption, and to diſcourage men from "repeating their tranſgreſſions, as *Clarke* pre-"tends, might, and in fact has countenanced "preſumption, without diſcouraging men from

‖ Clarke's Evidences of natural and revealed Religion, p. 351. Ed. 7th.

"repeating

"repeating their tranſgreſſions †." There is no doctrine but may be abuſed by the perverſeneſs of bad and licentious men. Sinners may take encouragement from the goodneſs and mercy of God to continue in their evil courſes, in hopes that he will not puniſh them for their crimes. And on the other hand, the doctrine concerning the juſtice of God may be abuſed to harden men in their ſins, and to cut them off from all hopes of mercy, which would have an equal tendency to deſtroy all piety and virtue, and ſubvert the very foundations of religion. But the Goſpel ſcheme of our reconciliation by the death of Chriſt provides admirably againſt both theſe extremes. On the one hand, the fulleſt diſcoveries are made of the infinite grace and goodneſs of God towards mankind, in that he gave his only-begotten Son that through his ſufferings and death a way might be opened for redeeming and ſaving the loſt human race. A free and univerſal offer is made of pardon and ſalvation to all ſinners without exception, that ſhall accept of offered mercy upon the gracious and reaſonable terms which are there appointed. The moſt exceeding great and precious promiſes are made, the moſt gracious aſſiſtances are provided to help our infirmities, and we are raiſed to the privileges of the children of God, and to the moſt animating hopes of a glorious reſurrection and eternal life, as the reward even of our imperfect obedience. It is impoſſible that

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† Vol. V. p. 289.

any

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any thing ſhould give us a more amiable idea of the Supreme Being, and of his wonderful love to mankind. Nothing can have a greater tendency to inlarge our joys, and to excite the moſt grateful and devout affections towards our heavenly Father, as the father of mercies, and the God of love, and towards the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great Saviour and lover of our natures, and to lay us under the ſtrongeſt ingagements to love and obey him.

But then on the other hand, leſt this ſhould be abuſed, the Goſpel preſents the Supreme Being as of infinite juſtice, righteouſneſs and purity, who hath ſuch a hatred againſt ſin, and ſuch a regard to the authority of his government and laws that he would not receive guilty tranſgreſſors of the human race to his grace and favour, upon any leſs conſideration than the ſufferings and ſacrifice of his well-beloved Son on their behalf; than which nothing could poſſibly exhibit a more awful diſplay of God's diſpleaſure againſt ſin: So that he hath taken care to manifeſt his righteouſneſs and juſtice, even in the methods of our reconciliation. We are farther aſſured, that though the ſacrifice Chriſt hath offered be ſo infinitely meritorious, yet the virtue of it is only applied upon ſuch terms as the divine wiſdom hath appointed, *i. e.* to thoſe only that return to God by a ſincere repentance and new obedience. So that on this plan the neceſſity of holineſs and obedience is moſt ſtrongly and effectually ſecured, ſince without this

fails there can be no interest in that great atone- LETTER XV.
ment, and consequently no hope of pardon and salvation. And the severest threatenings are denounced against those who abuse all this grace, and turn it into licentiousness: And they are warned, that their punishments shall be heightened in proportion to the aggravations of their crime. Thus the Gospel scheme of redemption through Jesus Christ hath an admirable propriety and harmony in it, and bears upon it the illustrious characters of a divine original. It giveth the greatest hopes to the upright and sincere, without affording the least ground of encouragement to the obstinately wicked and presumptuous sinner. It represents God as most amiable and most awful, infinitely good, gracious and merciful, and at the same time infinitely just, righteous, and holy. These characters in a lower degree must concur in an excellent earthly prince; much more must they be supposed to be united in the highest possible degree of eminency in the Supreme Being, the All-wise and All-perfect Governor of the world.

He concludes his remarks in what Dr. *Clarke* had offered to shew that the doctrine of our redemption by Christ is not contrary to reason, with a *general reflection or two*. One is this. "Let us suppose a great prince governing a "wicked and rebellious people: He has it in "his power to punish, but thinks fit to pardon "them. But he orders his only and well-be- "loved Son to be put to death, to expiate their "sins,

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"ſins, and ſatisfy his royal vengeance." And then he aſks, "Would this proceeding appear "to the eye of reaſon, and in the unprejudiced "light of nature, wiſe, or juſt, or good? No "man dares to ſay, that it would, except it be "a divine*." But no divine would put ſo abſurd a caſe, which, as he repreſents it, could not poſſibly anſwer any valuable end. The King could have no right to put his Son to death for the crimes of rebels, and to do it againſt his conſent would be the height of injuſtice and cruelty: And even if he ſhould conſent, it would be the irretrievable loſs of an hopeful Prince both to the King his father, and to the community who had an intereſt in his life. But if a caſe could be ſuppoſed, in which the death of an excellent Prince would be the ſaving of a ſtate from ruin, and the beſt and propereſt means for averting the greateſt public evils and calamities, and for procuring the greateſt public happineſs; I believe it would be acknowledged to be a glorious action for a King to give up his ſon; and for the Prince his ſon to give up himſelf to death, for ſo extenſive a benefit, and would be celebrated as ſuch to all ſucceeding ages. Though ſtill in that caſe there could be no hope of the ſuffering perſon's being reſtored to life, or to the public, or having a proper reward given him for ſo conſummate a virtue: Which makes a vaſt difference between this caſe, or indeed any other that could be put in human

* Vol. V. p. 289.

govern-

governments, and our redemption by the ſuf- LETTER
ferings and death of Chriſt as ſtated in the Go- XV.
ſpel.

His ſecond reflection is, that "Dr. *Clarke* ac-
"knowleges, that human reaſon could never
"have diſcovered ſuch a method as this for the
"reconciliation of ſinners to an offended God."
From whence he argues, that "therefore it
"cannot be ſaid that this method is agreeable
"to ſound unprejudiced reaſon, which is what
"Dr. *Clarke* here undertook to ſhew*." But
there is no inconſiſtency between theſe. A thing
may be of ſuch a kind that reaſon could not
have diſcovered it, and yet when diſcovered
may have nothing in it contrary to reaſon, and
may be ſuch as unprejudiced reaſon will approve.
And this I take to be the caſe of the Scripture
doctrine of our redemption. Our author indeed
hath attempted to ſhew, that this doctrine is
more abſurd than any thing that can be found
in any ſyſtem of paganiſm. But what he offers
to this purpoſe is entirely to be charged, not
upon the doctrine itſelf as laid down in Scrip-
ture, but upon the baſe and injurious repreſen-
tation he is pleaſed to make of it. He con-
cludes with ſaying, that "the heathens could
"not imagine any thing ſo repugnant, as the
"doctrine of our redemption by the death of
"Chriſt, to all their ideas of order, of juſtice,
"of goodneſs, and even of theiſm†." If this
were ſo, the heathen world were far from be-

* Vol. V. p. 290. † *Ib.* p. 291.

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ing ſo diſpoſed and prepared for receiving the Chriſtian myſteries as he ſometimes pretends they were. It will be acknowleged, that *Chriſt crucified* was to the *Greeks*, who had a high conceit of their own wiſdom and learning, *foolishneſs*: But it was the *wiſdom and power of God*, as St. Paul expreſſeth it. And accordingly this doctrine of the croſs of Chriſt triumphed over all the oppoſition which their boaſted learning and philoſophy, aſſiſted by the power and authority of the civil magiſtrate, the influence and artifices of the prieſts, and the prejudices of the vulgar, and the vices and paſſions of men could raiſe againſt it. There are, no doubt, great difficulties attending the ſcheme of our redemption. But this writer, if he were conſiſtent with himſelf, ought not to make this an objection againſt its truth or divine original. He obſerves, that "nothing is more conformable "to our ideas of the infinitely Perfect Being, "than to believe that human reaſon cannot ac"count for the proceedings of infinite wiſdom "in a multitude of inſtances, in many of thoſe "perhaps that ſeem the moſt obvious to it *." And he elſewhere declares, that "if infinite "wiſdom and power created and governs the "univerſe, we muſt prepare to meet with ſe"veral appearances, which we cannot explain, "nor reconcile to the ideas we endeavour to "form of the divine perfections, and which are "diſproportionable to our and every other

* Vol. V. p. 186.

finite

finite understanding *." And finding fault with the parts and presumption of divines, he says, "It would pass for downright madness, if we "were not accustomed to it, to hear a creature "of the lowest form of intelligent beings, un- "dertake to penetrate the designs, to fathom "the depths, and to unveil the mysteries, of "infinite wisdom, which the most exalted of "created intelligences would adore in silence †." This may be justly turned against himself. It is no presumption to believe what God has revealed of his councils concerning the methods of our salvation, or to think and speak of them as far as he has been pleased to declare them. But it is an inexcusable arrogance to presume to arraign the proceedings of infinite wisdom, made known to us in a well-attested revelation, because there are some things relating to them which we are not able distinctly to explain, or to account for. This is what our author hath done with a rashness and insolence that is shocking. Some passages of this kind have been already produced, to which I shall add one more. Speaking of the mystery of our redemption by the blood of Christ, he asserts, that "the love there displayed "is partiality, and the justice there shewed is "injustice. — And that injustice and cruelty "are united in this, that mankind would not "have been redeemed if the *Jews* had not "crucified Christ, and yet they were rejected "and punished for crucifying him ‡." He here

LETTER XX.

* Vol. V. p. 365. † *Ib.* p. 297. ‡ *Ib.* p. 582.

LETTER XV. chargeth it as a great injuſtice and cruelty to reject and puniſh the *Jews* for crucifying Chriſt, becauſe mankind could not have been redeemed without it: And yet he had before obſerved, that "Chriſt was ſacrificed by men who meaned "no expiation, and who meaned a murder, not "a ſacrifice *." God's bringing the greateſt good out of the injuſtice and wickedneſs of the *Jews*, which he foreſaw and permitted, but did not cauſe, is indeed an illuſtrious proof of his infinite wiſdom, but is no extenuation of their crime: And therefore there was no injuſtice in puniſhing them for it. But if the *Jews* had not crucified Chriſt, which is the caſe this writer puts, and which depends upon the modeſt ſuppoſition of God's being miſtaken in his preſcience, it would not follow that his deſigns for the redemption of mankind would have been diſappointed, infinite wiſdom would not have been at a loſs for proper methods to accompliſh its own glorious views.

This is not the only paſſage, in which our author, who upon all other occaſions ſets no bounds to his invectives againſt the *Jews*, expreſſes ſome pity towards them as having been very hardly dealt with in being puniſhed for crucifying our Lord. He obſerves, that "Chriſt "contrived at his death to appear innocent to "the *Roman* governor, and at the ſame time "contrived to appear guilty to the *Jews*, and "to make them the inſtruments of his death,

* Vol. V. p. 291.

"by

"by a ſequel of the moſt artful behaviour.——That they were rejected for not believing him to be the Meſſiah.——And he kept them in their error, at leaſt he did nothing to draw them out of it, that they might bring him to the croſs, and complete the redemption of mankind, without knowing that they did it at their own expence *." Nothing can poſſibly be more unfair and diſingenuous than this repreſentation. It is evident that our Lord took all proper opportunities of laying before the *Jews* the proofs of his Meſſiahſhip: And that nothing could be more wiſely conducted than the way he took gradually to remove their prejudices, though he did not make an expreſs and public declaration of his being the Meſſiah, till the evidence ſhould be completed, and it ſhould plainly appear, that his kingdom was not of this world. Inſtead of laying plots to engage the *Jews* to put him to death, he, on many occaſions, uſed the moſt prudent precautions to avoid the effects of their malice, till he could do it no longer without betraying the truth, and counteracting the deſign upon which he was ſent. LETTER XV.

The laſt thing I ſhall take notice of with regard to what Lord *Bolingbroke* hath offered concerning the doctrine of our redemption, is, that he repreſents it as having proceeded from *the pride of the human heart*. He blames Archbiſhop *Tillotſon* for obſerving very patheti-

* Vol. IV. p. 537, 538, 539.

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cally at the close of one of his Sermons, That "when the angels fell, God left them in their "fallen state: But when man fell, he sent his "Son, his only-begotten Son, his dearly-be-"loved Son, to redeem the race by his suffer-"ings and passions." Upon which he remarks, that "this raises us not only to an equality with "the angels, but to a superiority over them *." And he afterwards censures the divines for be-ing "unwilling to leave their notions of hu-"man worth and importance, or of the de-"signs of God in favour of man." And says, that "though our religion forbids pride, and "teaches humility, yet the whole system of it "tends to inspire the former." He instances in its teaching, that "man was made after the "image of God, and that God abandoned my-"riads of angels, but determined to raise man "from his fall by the sacrifice of his Son." And he asks, "Is it possible to conceive higher no-"tions of a created being, than these revealed "truths must inspire †?" It is certain, that, according to the Scripture account, God *spared not the angels that sinned*, though originally superior to the human race, but sent his Son to redeem mankind. And undoubtedly there were wise reasons for that proceeding, which God hath not thought fit to reveal to us, and which therefore we cannot pretend to judge of. But whatever was the reason of it, God's extending his grace and mercy to mankind in so marvel-

* Vol. IV. p. 506, 507. † Vol. V. p. 347.

lous a way certainly demandeth our moſt grate- LETTER
ful acknowlegements. We are taught every XV.
where in Scripture to aſcribe the great things God hath done for us, not to any worthineſs in ourſelves, but merely to his ſovereign unobliged grace and goodneſs. It is manifeſt that the whole ſcheme of Chriſtianity tendeth to inſpire us with the moſt adoring thoughts of God's infinite majeſty, greatneſs, and purity, and at the ſame time to impreſs and affect our hearts with the moſt humbling ſenſe of our own meanneſs, guilt, and unworthineſs. It tendeth not to inſpire us with pride, but with gratitude for undeſerved favours and benefits: And at the ſame time that it filleth us with the higheſt admiration of the divine condeſcenſion and goodneſs towards us, it teacheth us to ſink low into the very duſt before his glorious majeſty, acknowleging that we are leſs than the leaſt of his mercies, and giving him the whole glory of our ſalvation.

It is obſervable that Lord *Bolingbroke* ſeems on many occaſions very ſollicitous to prevent our having too high a conceit of our own excellence and importance. He blames the Pagan theiſts for flattering human nature, when they taught that a good man imitates God, and that God is a lover of mankind, and made man to be happy *. To human pride and ambition he attributes the notion of the ſoul's being a ſpiritual ſubſtance diſtinct from the body, and the

* Vol. V. p. 317, 318.

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belief of its immortality *. To this alſo he aſcribes the doctrine of a particular providence, and the notion that God is attentive to the prayers and wants of men; and is ready on many occaſions to aſſiſt, protect, and reward the good, and to puniſh or reclaim the wicked †. It ſeems then that for fear of being thought too proud and aſſuming, we muſt deny that we have any ſouls diſtinct from our bodies, or at leaſt muſt confeſs them to be like our bodies corruptible and mortal; we muſt not dare to aſpire after a conformity to the Deity in his moral excellencies, nor to think that he loveth us, or is concerned for our happineſs; we muſt either not addreſs ourſelves to him at all, or not preſume to imagine that he heareth or regardeth our prayers. It would be thinking too highly of our own importance to imagine that God exerciſeth any care or inſpection over us, or that he taketh notice of our actions with approbation or diſpleaſure, or will call us to an account for them. Thus this ſagacious writer hath found out the ſecret of baniſhing religion out of the world, under pretence of guarding againſt the pride of the human heart.

I need not take any particular notice of what his Lordſhip hath offered concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. He affirms, that "the "Scriptures which are come down to us are "very far from being vouchers of the Trinity "we profeſs to believe.——And that we may

* Vol IV. p. 481. † Vol. V. p. 418.

"aſſure

" assure ourselves, that many of the Scriptures LETTER
" and traditions which obtained in the primitive XV.
" ages, deposed against this Trinity *." Where he talks with as much confidence of Scriptures and traditions, which he supposes to be lost, and of what was contained in them, as if he himself had seen and read them. He chargeth St. *Peter* and St. *Paul* with inconsistency and contradiction, in sometimes calling Christ a man, and at other times talking a different language, and calling him God †. Though supposing him to have the human nature in a near union with the divine, there is no contradiction in it at all. He has a long marginal note about the sentiments of the primitive fathers concerning the Trinity, and censures Bishop *Bull* ‡. And he afterwards enlarges on the differences among Christians relating to it, and the disputes between *Arius* and *Athanasius* ‖. But he says nothing on this subject but what is very common, and has been often more fully and distinctly insisted upon by others, and therefore deserves no particular consideration here. What seems more peculiar to him is, that in the account he gives of the doctrine of the Trinity, he represents it as having been originally derived from the heathen theology. He says, that the heathen philosophers " assumed a Trinity of " divine hypostases in the Godhead. They held

* Vol. IV. p. 493. † *Ib.* p. 489. ‡ *Ib.* p. 98, *et seq.*
‖ *Ib.* p. 483, *et seq.*

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"a *Monad* or Unity above all eſſence, a ſecond "proceeding eternally from the firſt, and a "third proceeding eternally from the ſecond, "or from the firſt and ſecond *." That the hypotheſis of the Trinity made a part of the *Egyptian* theology. "It was brought from "*Egypt* into *Greece* by *Orpheus*, whoſoever he "was, and probably by others in that remote "antiquity: And that it was in much uſe afterwards, and we find the traces of it in all the "theiſtical philoſophers taught †." He ſpeaks of the *Egyptian*, *Pythagorean*, *Platonic*, and of the *Zoroaſtrian*, *Chaldaic*, and *Samothracian* Trinity ‡. And he mentions it alſo as having been antiently taught among the *Chineſe*, and produces a paſſage out of one of their antient books to this purpoſe ‖. A late ingenious author has carried this ſtill farther, and has endeavoured at large to ſhew that ſome veſtiges of the doctrines of the Trinity are to be found among the ſages of all nations, times, and religions §. But he differs from Lord *Bolingbroke* in this, that whereas his Lordſhip charges it on the vain ſubtilties and reveries of the antient metaphyſical theology, this gentleman ſuppoſes it muſt have been owing to ſupernatural revelation, or ſome tradition originally derived from thence. And I cannot help thinking, that

* Vol. IV. p. 94, 95. † *Ib.* p. 97, 470, 471. ‡ *Ib.* p. 472.
‖ Vol. V. p. 230. § See Chevalier Ramſay's Principles of natural and revealed religion, Vol. II. Chap. 2.

ſuppoſing

supposing the fact to have been as they both re- LETTER
present it, this seems to be a more reasonable XV.
way of accounting for it. Since it is otherwise not easy to conceive how it should come to pass that so many great and wise men in different ages and nations from the most antient times should have agreed in acknowleging some kind of triad in the divine nature.

I shall only take notice of one passage more in Lord *Bolingbroke*'s works relating to the Trinity: It is this, That "the doctrine of the "Trinity gives the *Mahometans* as much rea- "son to say, that the revelation which *Ma-* "*homet* published was necessary to establish "the unity of the Supreme Being, in opposi- "tion to the polytheism which Christianity "had introduced, as Christians have to insist, "that the revelation which Christ published a "few centuries before, was necessary to esta- "blish the unity of the Godhead against the "Pagan polytheism *." But the case was very different. The unity of God could not be more strongly and expressly asserted than it is in the Holy Scriptures both of the Old Testament and the New: So that the pretended revelation of *Mahomet* was needless in this respect. It is a fundamental principle of Christianity, that there is but one God, and one Mediator between God and man, and that Jesus Christ is he. Those who maintain the doctrine of the

* Vol. IV. p. 501.

Trinity

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Trinity ſtill hold the unity of the Godhead. Convince them that the Trinity is inconſiſtent with that unity, and they will abandon it. They cannot therefore be juſtly charged with polytheiſm, which is only imputed to them by a conſequence which they expreſly deny and diſavow.

LETTER

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The Chriſtian doctrine of future retributions vindicated. It does not charge God with injuſtice in this preſent ſtate. Future puniſhments not contrary to reaſon or the divine attributes. The pretence that they can be of no uſe either for reparation or terror, examined. The rewards and puniſhments of a future ſtate ſhall be proportioned to the different degrees of virtue and vice. The propriety of appointing a ſtate of trial to reaſonable beings. It is wiſely ordered, that the ſentence at the day of judgment ſhall be final and irreverſible. The Chriſtian repreſentation of that judgment and its conſequences, ſolemn and affecting, and of excellent uſe. Lord Bolingbroke's *injurious charge againſt the primitive Chriſtians. His complaints of the corruptions brought into the Chriſtian Church. Such writers very improper to ſet up for reformers. True genuine Chriſtianity needs not fear the aſſaults of its ableſt adverſaries.*

SIR,

IT is a ſatisfaction to me, as I am apt to think it is to you, that the work is drawing near to a concluſion; and the more ſo, as you know that I have, during a conſiderable part of the time

in

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in which I have been engaged in it, laboured under great indiſpoſition of body, which has rendered it more tedious and fatiguing to me, than otherwiſe it would have been. It will be well, if ſome marks of this do not appear in the performance itſelf. If this be the caſe, I hope candid allowance will be made for it.

The only thing that now remains to be conſidered, with regard to Lord *Bolingbroke's* attempts againſt Chriſtianity, relateth to what he has offered concerning the Scripture doctrine of rewards and puniſhments. He has done all he could to expoſe that doctrine, and Chriſtianity on the account of it, eſpecially the doctrine of future puniſhments. This is the principal deſign of ſeveral of his Fragments and Eſſays in the latter part of the fifth volume of his works; particularly of the ſixty-ſixth, ſixty-ſeventh, ſixty-eighth, ſixty-ninth, ſeventieth, ſeventy-firſt, ſeventy-ſecond, and ſeventy-ſeventh, of thoſe Fragments and Eſſays.

Before I enter on a diſtinct conſideration of what he has offered on that ſubject, I would make two general obſervations.

The one is, that he aſſerts the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments to be an original doctrine of the Chriſtian religion. He expreſly aſſerts, that "future rewards and puniſhments "are ſanctions of the evangelical law *:" That "it was part of the original revelation.——And "when the Chriſtians adopted this doctrine,

* Vol. V. p. 514.

"they

" they received the new law and the new LETTER
" ſanction together on the faith of the ſame re- XVI.
" velation *." And indeed it cannot be denied, that this is a doctrine ſtrongly and moſt expreſly inſiſted on by our bleſſed Saviour himſelf as a doctrine of principal importance. So that this may be juſtly regarded as a fundamental doctrine of that original Chriſtianity for which this writer profeſſeth ſo great an eſteem, and the truth, the excellency, and even divinity of which he ſometimes pretends to acknowlege.

The other obſervation is this: That he makes the worſt repreſentation imaginable of this doctrine, as both falſe, and of a pernicious tendency. He aſſerts, that " the double ſanction " of rewards and puniſhments in a future ſtate " was, in fact, invented by men. It appears " to be ſo by the evident marks of humanity that " characteriſe it. —— That theſe notions ſavour " more of the human paſſions, than of juſtice " or prudence.—That the vulgar heathens be- " lieved their *Jupiter* liable to ſo many human " paſſions, that they might eaſily believe him " liable in his government of mankind, to thoſe " of love and hatred, of anger and vengeance. " ——That the *Jews* entertained ſuch unworthy " notions of God, and their ſyſtem contained " ſuch inſtances of partiality in love and hatred, " of furious anger, and unrelenting vengeance, " in a long ſeries of arbitrary judgments, that " they would be ready to receive this heatheniſh

* Vol. V. p. 516.

" doctrine

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" doctrine of his arbitrary and cruel proceed-
" ings hereafter.——That accordingly this do-
" ctrine was in vogue in the Church of *Moſes*,
" when that of *Jeſus* began.——And that it
" made a part of the *original Chriſtian revela-*
" *tion* *."——This doctrine he frequently repre-
ſents as not only of human invention, but as ab-
ſurd and impious, and even as *blaſphemous*; and
he aſſerts, that it is *impoſſible to reconcile it to the*
divine attributes †. And after having ſaid that
the *Jews* " blended together at once in the
" moral character of God, injuſtice, cruelty,
" and partiality, he adds, that the moral cha-
" racter imputed to the Supreme Being by the
" Chriſtian theology, differs little from that im-
" puted to him by the *Jewiſh*." Yea, he makes
it the worſe of the two.——That " ſudden and
" violent anger are imputed to him in the one
" ſyſtem, ſlow and ſilent revenge in the other.
" That he is repreſented by the latter as waiting
" to puniſh hereafter with unrelenting vengeance
" and eternal torments, when it is too late to
" terrify, becauſe it is too late to reform ‡."
Thus he repreſents that which he would have
paſs for an eſſential article of the original
Chriſtian revelation, as giving a worſe idea of
God than the *Jewiſh* revelation, which yet he
pretends makes ſuch a repreſentation of the
Deity as is worſe than atheiſm.

I ſhall now examine what he has offered to
make good ſo heavy and injurious a charge.

* Vol. V. p. 515, 516. † *Ibid.* ‡ *Ib.* p. 532, 533.

Some of his arguments are designed, if they prove any thing at all, to bear against future rewards and punishments in general; and some are particularly levelled against the Christian doctrine of future rewards and punishments. LETTER XVI.

As to the former, some notice has been already taken of what he had urged to invalidate the belief of a future state of retributions. I shall not repeat what has been offered above in the eighth Letter to this purpose, but shall proceed to mention some things, which I had no occasion there to insist upon, as they make a part of the argument, as he has managed it, against the Christian revelation.

He charges those who assert, as Dr. *Clarke* has done, that "future retributions are necessary to "set the present disorders and inequalities right, "and to justify, upon the whole, the scheme "of providence," as in effect maintaining, that "God acts against his attributes, and the perfections of his nature in one system, only to "have a reason the more for acting agreeably to "them in another ‖." He urges, that "it is profane to insinuate, much more to affirm peremptorily, that the proceedings of God towards men in the present life are unjust; and "that if that could be admitted, it would be absurd to admit that this may be set right, which "means, if the words have any meaning, that this "injustice must cease to be injustice on the received hypothesis of his proceedings towards "man in another life." And he argues, that

‖ Vol. V. p. 356.

omni-

LETTER XVI. "omnipotence itself cannot cause that which "has been done not to have been done *." The force of this argument depends upon a groſs miſrepreſentation of the ſenſe of thoſe whom he has thought fit to oppoſe. No Chriſtian divines pretend, that God's proceedings towards men in this preſent life are unjuſt. On the contrary, they maintain, that it is juſt and wiſe in God, and ſuitable to the nature of this ſtate of trial and diſcipline, to ſuffer things to go on as they do in their preſent courſe; and that it is agreeable to the order of things that a ſtate of final retributions ſhould ſucceed. They are far from thinking, that what is now injuſtice will in a future ſtate ceaſe to be injuſtice. But they maintain, that that juſtice, the execution of which is for very wiſe reaſons delayed, ſhall be exerciſed and diſplayed in the fitteſt ſeaſon. That that puniſhment of the wicked which is not for the preſent inflicted, though deſigned, ſhall be executed, when it is moſt proper it ſhould be ſo: And that reward of the righteous, which is not as yet actually conferred, ſhall be conferred when it is fitteſt it ſhould be conferred, and when they are beſt prepared for receiving it. They aſſert, that the evils and ſufferings, which good men endure in this preſent ſtate are perfectly conſiſtent with the divine juſtice, becauſe they are either ſent as chaſtiſements and corrections for their ſins and miſcarriages, or as ſeaſonable trials for the exerciſe and improvement of their virtues, and to

* Vol. V. p. 493, 494.

diſci-

diſcipline them for a better world; and that in a future ſtate the trial ſhall be over, and their virtue fully rewarded, and they ſhall arrive to the true felicity and perfection of their nature: And on the other hand, that wicked perſons are here often ſuffered to proſper, and have many advantages and benefits given them, to lead them to repentance, and to anſwer many wiſe ends of providence. And if they prove incorrigible to the methods of diſcipline which are here made uſe of, thoſe puniſhments which were here deferred, ſhall be at length inflicted, and God's righteouſneſs, and juſt deteſtation againſt ſin, ſhall be awfully manifeſted and diſplayed.

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But it is eſpecially againſt future puniſhments that he bends his force. He obſerves, that "the "heathen philoſophers, even thoſe of them "who aſſumed providence to be the moſt active "in directing the affairs of this world, were "unanimous in their opinion, that the Su"preme Being was never angry, nor ever did "harm;" for which he cites a paſſage from *Tully's Offices*, lib. 3, *Num iratum timemus Jovem? At hoc quidem commune eſt omnium philoſophorum —— Nunquam nec iraſci Deum, nec nocere* *. It will be eaſily allowed, that anger ſtrictly ſpeaking, as it ſignifies a paſſionate emotion, ſuch as is to be found in ſuch imperfect creatures as we are, cannot be aſcribed to God; but to deny that he is diſpleaſed or offended

* Vol. V. p. 510.

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fended with the ſins of his creatures, which is all that is intended when anger is aſcribed to him in the ſacred writings, is really to ſtrike at the foundations of all religion, and under pretence of honourable thoughts of God, to baniſh the fear of a Deity out of the world. It was a maxim of the *Epicureans* concerning the divine nature,

Nec bene promeritis capitur, nec tangitur ira.

And their deſign in it was to deny the providence of God, and to repreſent him as abſolutely unconcerned about the actions of men, ſo as neither to reward the good, nor to puniſh evil-doers. And this, if it holdeth at all, will equally hold againſt God's puniſhing the wicked in this life, and in the next. And it looks as if this was our author's intention. He urges, that "neither reaſon nor experience will ſhew us, in "the Author of nature, an angry, revengeful "judge, or bloody executioner †." But to miſcal things does not alter their nature. It is eaſy to throw a hard name, and to call juſtice vengeance and cruelty: But no argument can be drawn from this to prove, that that which is one of the moſt glorious perfections, and inſeparable from the wiſe and righteous Governor of the world, ought to paſs for the worſt of characters. If the Supreme Being be not utterly indifferent to virtue and vice, to good and

† Vol. V. p. 209.

evil,

evil, to the happineſs and miſery of his creatures, it muſt be ſaid that he approveth the one, and is diſpleaſed with the other; and in that caſe he will ſhew his approbation and diſpleaſure by ſuitable effects. What ſhould we think of an earthly prince, that ſhould not concern himſelf whether his laws be obſerved or not, and ſhould ſuffer them to be tranſgreſſed with impunity? And is this the idea we ſhould form of the Supreme Lord of the univerſe? If this were the caſe, what could be expected but univerſal diſorder and confuſion in the moral world? It is the ſame thing, as if all things were left to a wild chance without a Supreme Governor and Judge. LETTER XVI.

There is a very extraordinary way of arguing which this writer makes uſe of to ſet aſide future puniſhments. He obſerves, that "to aſſume "that the divine providence towards mankind "in this world has one criterion, and in the "next another, would be extravagant *." And therefore he mentions it as an abſurdity in the Chriſtian ſcheme, that "the proceedings of the "future ſtate ſhall be the very reverſe of the "preſent; for then every individual human "creature is to be tried; whereas here they are "only conſidered collectively, that the moſt ſe-"cret actions, nay, the very thoughts of the heart "will be laid open, and ſentence will be pro-"nounced accordingly †." The plain meaning of this is, that the individuals of mankind ſhall

* Vol. V. p. 498. † *Ib.* p. 494.

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not be obnoxious to any punishment from God either in this world, or in the next; and consequently that there shall be no exercise of divine justice here or hereafter. For he himself declares, that "justice requires, that rewards and "punishments should be measured out in various "degrees, according to the various circum-"stances of particular cases, and in proportion "to them." He has endeavoured to turn that into an argument against the Christian account of a future judgment, which is really its glory, and a great proof of its truth, *viz.* that men's secret actions, and even the thoughts of their hearts, shall then be laid open. These are things that lie quite out of the reach of human judicatories, and yet upon these it is that the morality of actions doth properly depend. If therefore there be no account to be given of them here or hereafter, men's best or worst actions or dispositions will go unrewarded or unpunished, which is the highest absurdity, supposing there is a Supreme moral Governor and Judge. But according to the account given us in the Gospel, *the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed*, the hidden springs shall be enquired into, from whence good and evil actions flow, men shall be shewn in their true characters, no real good action shall pass unrewarded or evil one unpunished; than which nothing can possibly have a greater influence to engage us to exercise a constant care over our inward temper, and our outward conduct.

Another

Another argument he makes uſe of, which, as far as it is of any force, bears againſt future puniſhments in general. It is this; That "reparation and terror are objects eſſential to the "conſtitution of human juſtice. But what "does that juſtice require, if it may be called "juſtice, when it tends neither to reparation, "nor terror *?" He acknowleges what ſome engaged in the ſame cauſe have thought fit to deny, that "to reform offenders is not the ſole "nor the principal end of puniſhment. Thoſe "that are capital muſt have ſome other. The "criminal is executed for the ſake of others, "and that he may do ſome good by the terror "of his death. The prince that ſhould puniſh "without regard to reparation or terror, could "have no motive to puniſh but the pleaſure of "puniſhing; which no ſpirit but that of anger, "vengeance, or cruelty, can inſpire." He aſks "therefore, What effects can puniſhments have, "when the ſyſtem of human government is at "an end, the ſtate of probation is over, when "there is no farther means for reformation "of the wicked, nor reparation to the injured by thoſe who injured them, and when "the eternal lots of all mankind are caſt, and "terror is of no farther uſe†?" But it is to be conſidered, that the terror of that future puniſhment is of great uſe in this preſent ſtate. The proper deſign of the threatenings of future puniſhment, is not to inflict the puniſhment, but to prevent the wickedneſs, and thereby to

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* Vol. V. p. 494, 495. † *Ib.* p. 507, 508.

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prevent the puniſhment. But when once thoſe threatenings are denounced, juſtice and truth, and the majeſty of the Supreme Ruler, require that they ſhould be ordinarily executed upon thoſe who, notwithſtanding thoſe threatenings, perſiſt in their wicked courſes. For if it were laid down as a principle, that though theſe threatenings were donounced, juſtice or goodneſs would not ſuffer them to be executed, it would be the ſame thing as if there were no threatenings at all; ſince they would in that caſe anſwer no purpoſe, and could not be ſaid to be ſo much as in *terrorem*. But beſides the neceſſity there is that ſuch puniſhments ſhould be threatened here for the ſake of preſerving order, and reſtraining wickedneſs among mankind, even in this preſent ſtate, and conſequently, that they ſhould be executed hereafter upon thoſe that have incurred the threatened penalties, of what uſe the execution of them may be to other orders of beings in a future ſtate, to inſpire an abhorrence of ſin, and a fear of the divine majeſty, and how far the influence of them may extend, no man can take upon him to determine. The Scripture intimates as if the future judgments were to be tranſacted in a moſt ſolemn manner, in the view not merely of the whole human race, but of other orders of intelligent beings. Mention is often made of great numbers of angels as preſent on that occaſion. Thoſe puniſhments may therefore be of very extenſive uſe, for any thing that can be proved to the contrary, for promoting the general good, for

for diſplaying the evil of ſin, and vindicating the majeſty of the divine laws and government, and may ſerve as ſolemn warnings to the intellectual creation. God takes no pleaſure in their torments as ſuch, but in anſwering the great ends of his governments, in taking the propereſt methods to promote the good of the whole, in the exerciſe and diſplay of his own infinite righteouſneſs and purity, in ſeparating the juſt from the unjuſt, and putting a viſible eternal diſcrimination between the obſtinate oppoſers of his authority and goodneſs, and thoſe who loved and ſerved him in ſincerity. LETTER XVI.

When this writer reckoneth *reparation* among the ends of puniſhment, he ſeemeth by reparation to mean only the repairing the injuries done by one creature to another; as if all the malignity and demerit of ſin conſiſted only in its being a wrong done to our fellow-creatures; and as if it were not to be conſidered or puniſhed at all as an offence againſt the divine majeſty, and a violation of the laws of the ſupreme univerſal Lord. But this is a great miſtake. Sin is indeed a great evil conſidered as an offence committed againſt our fellow-creatures, and againſt the true dignity, perfection, and happineſs, of our own natures, and a counteracting the proper end and order of our beings; but the principal part of its malignity is its being an inſurrection againſt the majeſty and authority of the great Lord of the univerſe, to whom we owe all poſſible ſubjection and obe-

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dience, an oppoſing our wills and appetites to the will and law of the Supreme, the baſeſt ingratitude to his infinite goodneſs, a caſting an indignity on his adorable perfections, and on the wiſdom and righteouſneſs of his government, and therefore a breach of univerſal order. This is what renders ſin principally criminal and odious; and what we ought to have a chief regard to in our humble confeſſions, or elſe we are not true penitents. And as it is in this that its malignity chiefly conſiſteth, and as God would have us abhor it principally on this account, ſo it is on this account eſpecially that he puniſheth it: For he judgeth of things as they really are. If the greateſt evil of ſin conſiſteth in its being an offence committed againſt the divine majeſty, a wilful tranſgreſſion of his known laws, and an oppoſition to his authority and goodneſs, if the more there is of this in any ſin the more heinous its guilt muſt be acknowleged to be, if this carrieth an infinitely greater, a more monſtrous malignity in it than its being merely an offence againſt creatures like ourſelves, it is contrary to all the dictates of reaſon and good ſenſe to ſuppoſe that the moſt wiſe and righteous Governor of the world in puniſhing ſin hath not principally a regard to that on the account of which it principally deſerveth puniſhment. It is true that God cannot be really hurt by our ſins and vices, nor beatified by our obedience and our virtues. But this is only owing to the tranſcendent excellency of his

his own moſt perfect nature. And it would be a ſtrange thing to make the infinite perfection of his nature a reaſon why his creatures ſhould be allowed to tranſgreſs his laws with impunity. On the contrary, the greater the excellency of his nature is, the greater is the evil of ſin as committed againſt his infinite majeſty; and that very perfection of his nature makes it impoſſible for him not to hate all moral evil. For it is manifeſt that an eternal love of order, purity, and righteouſneſs, is neceſſarily included in infinite perfection. And how ſhall he ſhew his juſt abhorrence of ſin, and averſion to the breach of moral order, but by the marks and effects of his diſpleaſure againſt it, that is, by puniſhing obſtinate preſumptuous tranſgreſſors. LETTER XVI.

Our author tells us, that "future puniſhments "were not believed by the philoſophers, not "even by *Plato* and *Pythagoras*, though they "talked of them *." And that at the coming "of our Saviour, they were generally diſre-"garded, even by the vulgar." If this were ſo, it became the more neceſſary to renew the diſcovery, and ſet it in a clearer and ſtronger light, ſince it was of vaſt importance to mankind to believe it. By his own acknowlegement, the ableſt philoſophers and legiſlators thought ſo. And he himſelf frequently owns the great uſefulneſs of this doctrine. And its uſefulneſs is, as I have before obſerved, in conjunction with

* Vol. V. p. 513.

other

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other conſiderations, no ſmall argument of its truth.

Having conſidered what he hath offered with relation to future rewards and puniſhments in general, I ſhall now examine the particular objections he hath urged againſt the accounts given of them in the Chriſtian revelation.

He obſerves, that "had the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments been more general, and leſs deſcriptive; had future puniſhments been repreſented like the rewards, to be ſimply ſuch as eye never ſaw, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man could conceive, it might have been maintained in credit, and have had an univerſal and real influence, perhaps to the great advantage of religion. But beſides the abſurdity of ſuppoſing that God inflicts eternal puniſhments on his creatures, which would render their non-exiſtence infinitely preferable to their exiſtence on the whole;" he apprehends, that "an air of ridicule has been caſt on this doctrine by preſerving all the idle tales and burleſque images, which were propagated in thoſe days." He repreſents it as "nearly reſembling the *mythologia de inferis*, which has been ſo often laughed at*." As to the account given us in the Goſpel of the future reward, it is incomparably noble and excellent, and not quite ſo general as he repreſents it, but ſuch as is fitted to raiſe in us the higheſt ideas of the felicity and

* Vol. V. p. 542.

perfection

perfection to which good men ſhall be raiſed in the heavenly world. The deſcriptions there ſet before us of future puniſhments are general, but very expreſſive. And the burleſque images he ſpeaks of are awful and ſtriking repreſentations, deſigned and fitted to convey images of terror, but not mixed with any trifling or ridiculous circumſtances, like the poetical tales and fables he refers to. LETTER XVI.

But what he ſeems to lay a principal ſtreſs upon for expoſing the Chriſtian doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments, is this: That "juſtice requires "moſt certainly that rewards and puniſhments "ſhould be meaſured out in every particular "caſe, in proportion to the merit and demerit "of each individual. But inſtead of this, it is "aſſured, that the righteous and the wicked "are tranſported into heaven, or plunged into "hell, without any diſtinction of the particular caſes which have been ſo ſolemnly deter-"mined, and without any proportion obſerved "between the various degrees of merit and de-"merit in the application of thoſe rewards "and puniſhments *." And in all that he offers in the latter part of the ſixty-eighth of his Fragments and Eſſays, he proceeds upon this ſuppoſition, that "the greateſt and leaſt degree of "virtue ſhall be rewarded, and the greateſt "and leaſt degree of vice puniſhed alike:" And that it is "arbitrary and tyrannical to make no "diſtinction of perſons in diſſimilar caſes †."

* Vol. V. p. 495. † *Ib.* p. 496.

And

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And again he urges, that * the hypothesis of "of all being saved alike, or damned in the "lump, tends to destroy little by little, all those "impressions which the belief of a future state "is so usefully designed to give *."

All that his Lordship here offers depends upon a great misapprehension, or a wilful misrepresentation of the Christian doctrine on this head. If men were to be rewarded and punished hereafter only collectively, and no regard had to individuals, which our author would persuade us is the method of God's proceeding towards mankind in this present state, then it might be admitted that men are saved and damned only *in the lump*, as he is pleased to express it. But this is not the Scripture representation of God's proceedings in a future state. We are there most expressly assured, that the case of every individual shall be examined and judged. It is thus that our Lord, who is to be our Judge, represents it: He tells us, that he will *come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, and then shall be reward every man according to his works*, Matt. xvi. 27. St. *Paul* expressly declares, that *God will render to every man according to his deeds*, Rom. ii. 6. That *every one of us shall give an account of himself to God*, Rom. xiv. 12. That *we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it*

* Vol. V. p. 503.

be

be good or bad, 2 Cor. v. 10. That *every man's work shall be tried, and made manifeſt*, 1 Cor. iii. 13. In ſpeaking of the reſpective duties of maſters and ſervants, he lets them know, that the meaneſt ſhall not be neglected, but ſhall receive a proper reward: That *whatſoever good thing a man doeth, the ſame ſhall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. But he that doeth wrong, ſhall receive for the wrong which he hath done; and there is no reſpect of perſons*, Eph. vi. 8, 9. Col. iii. 25. St. *Peter* aſſureth us, that *God without reſpect of perſons judgeth according to every man's work*, 1 Pet. i. 17. Chriſt is introduced as declaring, *I am he which ſearcheth the reins and hearts, and I will give unto every one of you according to your works*, Rev. ii. 19. And in the deſcription of the future judgment, *Rev.* xx. 12. to ſhew the exactneſs of that judgment, it is ſaid, that *the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of thoſe things which were written in the books, according to their works*. And it is repeated again, ver. 13. they *were judged every man according to their works*.

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From theſe ſeveral paſſages compared together it appears with the utmoſt evidence, that according to the whole tenor of the New Teſtament, in the diſpenſing future retributions, *the rewards and puniſhments ſhall be meaſured out in every particular caſe, in proportion to the merit and demerit of each individual*, which our author ſaith is what juſtice requires. It is therefore manifeſt, that what is there ſaid concerning

that

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that future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments, muſt be underſtood in a conſiſtency with the making an exact diſtribution according to particular caſes and circumſtances. And that the general repreſentations there made of heaven as a ſtate of future happineſs to the righteous, and of hell as a ſtate of future puniſhment to the wicked, muſt be ſo taken and explained as to comport with the different degrees of rewards and puniſhments to the one and to the other; and not as if all good men were to be raiſed to the ſame degree of future glory and happineſs; and all bad men to be puniſhed with the ſame degree of miſery; ſince it is ſo frequently and expreſly declared, that God will then, without reſpect of perſons, render to every man according to his deeds; and that every man ſhall then receive according to what he hath done in the body. The general deſcriptions of that future glory are indeed ſublime and noble, and repreſent it in a moſt attractive view. And it was proper it ſhould be ſo. They ſet before us a happineſs beyond imagination great and glorious, the more effectually to animate us to a patient continuance in well-doing. And it is ſignified, that it is of ſuch a nature, ſo tranſcendently great and excellent, as vaſtly to exceed what any of the human race could in ſtrictneſs of juſtice have deſerved. For the obedience of the beſt of men is very imperfect, and mixed with many defects; and therefore that eternal life and happineſs is repreſented as the *gift of God*

through Jeſus Chriſt. That reward is the effect of free ſovereign grace and goodneſs. And therefore none can find fault if the glory and happineſs which ſhall be conferred upon good men hereafter be above what they could be ſaid to have ſtrictly merited. But though the very loweſt degree of reward and happineſs in that future ſtate ſhall be far ſuperior to what the beſt of men could have pretended to have challenged as in ſtrictneſs of juſtice due to his merits, yet God ſhall ſo order it in his infinite wiſdom and righteouſneſs, that there ſhall be an admirable proportion obſerved in giving different degrees of glory, according to the different proficiencies men had made in real goodneſs during their ſtate of trial. Nothing can be clearer to this purpoſe than our Saviour's determination in the parable of the pounds, *Luke* xix. 12, 20. where he repreſents higher honours and rewards conferred upon ſome than upon others, according to their different degrees of uſefulneſs, and the different improvements they had made of what was committed to them. And in the bleſſings he pronounceth upon thoſe that are perſecuted for righteouſneſs ſake, he plainly intimates, that they ſhould be diſtinguiſhed with a higher reward in heaven than many others, in proportion to their greater ſufferings and ſervices. And in general he declares, that in his *father's houſe are many manſions*; which ſuppoſes that there ſhall be different abodes provided for good men in that future world, into which they ſhall be

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BETTER XVI. be distributed, each of them happy in their several ways, and each contented with the lot assigned them. But no-where are we particularly told, what shall be the lowest degree of happiness and reward which shall be conferred on the lowest degrees of real virtue and righteousness, nor would such a discovery be of any use to mankind, or answer any valuable purpose.

As to future punishments, in the inflicting of these the strictest regard shall be had to the rules of justice, so that no man shall be punished beyond his demerits. This incontestably follows from the frequent declarations that are made, and which have been already produced, that God will render to every man according to his deeds, without respect of persons. But besides these general declarations, there are several passages of Scripture which are designed to shew, that there shall be a remarkable difference made between some bad men and others in the punishments inflicted on them; and that in the inflicting these punishments a regard shall be had to the different aggravations of their crimes. This is what our Lord plainly signifies, when he declares with great solemnity, that it *shall be more tolerable for* Sodom *and* Gomorrah *in the day of judgment*, that is, for the most profligate parts of the heathen world, than for those that obstinately rejected and abused the Gospel offers of mercy and salvation, and who go on in an obstinate course of presumptuous sin and disobedience, in opposition to the clearest light,

and

and moſt glorious advantages. And again, he declares, that *that ſervant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himſelf, neither did according to his will, ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of ſtripes, ſhall be beaten with few ſtripes. For unto whomſoever much is given, of him ſhall be much required: And to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask more,* Luke xii. 47, 48. Nothing can be plainer than it is from this repreſentation, that among thoſe who ſhall be puniſhed in a future ſtate, great difference ſhall be made in the degrees of puniſhment inflicted on them according to their different demerits; and that an exact conſideration ſhall be had of their ſeveral caſes, and an equitable proportion ſhall be obſerved, and all proper allowances made. The general deſcriptions therefore of theſe future puniſhments are to be interpreted in a conſiſtency with ſuppoſing a very great difference made between ſome and others in the degrees of their puniſhment. In theſe general deſcriptions the ſtrongeſt images of terror are made uſe of, and it is highly proper it ſhould be ſo. The puniſhments are deſcribed in their higheſt degree, as they ſhall be inflicted on the moſt obſtinate and heinous offenders. No-where are we particularly told what ſhall be the loweſt degree of puniſhment which ſhall be inflicted in that future world; nor what that ſtate of vice and guilt is, which ſhall ſubject men to the leaſt LETTER XVI.

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punishment. Such declarations could answer no good end, and would probably be abused. It is more wisely done to leave that matter in general expressions; at the same time assuring us, that every man shall be punished in a strict proportion to the circumstances of his crime.

A due consideration of this will in a great measure obviate the principal objections this author hath urged against the eternal duration of that future punishment, which depend principally upon this supposition, that all shall be alike subjected to the most extreme degree of torment and misery, and so shall continue for ever: Whereas if it be considered, that there shall be a vast and amazing difference made between some and others, in that future world; that the state of some shall be tolerable compared with that of others; and that every man's case shall be considered, and his condition wisely and exactly proportioned to what he had deserved; on this supposition, whatever the duration of it is supposed to be, it is still just.

Here it will not be improper to take notice of a remarkable passage of this writer in relation to this present subject. He says, "he could easily "persuade himself, that the mercy of God par- "dons the offenders who amend, consistently "with his justice; for else, as all men offend, "all men would be punished; and that his "goodness may carry on the work his mercy "has begun, and place such as are the objects "of both in a state, where they will be exempt

"perhaps

" perhaps eternally from all natural, and as much LETTER
" as finite creatures can be, from all moral evil. XVI.
" He could perſuade himſelf, that they who
" are the objects of neither, and are not there-
" fore pardoned, remain, if they do remain,
" excluded from the happineſs of the others,
" and reduced to a forlorn ſtate. Some ſuch
" hypotheſis, where no certainty is to be had, I
" could admit, ſays he, as probable, becauſe it
" contradicts none of the divine attributes, ſets
" none of them at variance, nor breaks their
" harmony." Here he ſuppoſes it to be a probable hypotheſis, and perfectly conſiſtent with the divine attributes, not only that ſome men who are the proper objects of the divine goodneſs and mercy, may continue eternally in a happy ſtate exempt from all evil; but that others who by their conduct have rendered themſelves not the proper objects of the divine mercy, may be debarred from pardon, and may remain, whilſt they do remain, and conſequently may remain eternally, ſuppoſing them to continue in eternal exiſtence, excluded from that happineſs which the others enjoy, and reduced to a forlorn ſtate. If therefore we be aſſured by a well-atteſted revelation, that this ſhall really be the caſe, he ought not to object againſt it.

But he urges, that " it is abſurd to ſuppoſe, that
" our ſtate of probation ends with this preſent
" life, and that judgment will be determined
" by what we have done in this ſtate.—And
" that a virtue or wickedneſs of fifty or ſixty

LETTER XVI. "years, ſhould be rewarded with eternal happineſs, or puniſhed with eternal miſery *." The objection that is drawn from the diſproportion there is between the duration of the ſtate of trial, and the eternity that is to ſucceed it, might be made, whatever we ſuppoſe the continuance of the time of trial to be. But the ſhortneſs of this ſtate of trial furniſheth a powerful conſideration to engage us to improve it. And very probably, if it were ordinarily much longer than it is, the condition of mankind might be worſe in the preſent corrupt ſtate of the human nature than it now is; as the length of men's lives before the flood probably contributed to the wickedneſs that ſo much abounded. The argument therefore, as far as there is any weight in it, holdeth againſt the ſuppoſing any ſtate of trial at all, of whatever continuance. But do we know enough of the meaſures and deſigns of the divine government, to be able to pronounce, that it may not be worthy of God as the Supreme Governor of the world, to appoint to his reaſonable creatures a ſtate of trial and diſcipline, and to deal with them according to their behaviour in ſuch a ſtate, and let them know, that if they obſtinately perſiſt in their rebellion and diſobedience, he will at length ſhut up his grace from them, and they ſhall be excluded from that glory and felicity, with which he would have bountifully rewarded their perſeverance in a courſe of piety and vir-

* Vol. V. p. 493, 504, 505.

tue

tue during the time of trial allotted them. It may be left to impartial reaſon, whether this conſtitution would not be more wiſely ordained, and more likely to promote the intereſts of virtue and good order in the world, and to repreſs vice and wickedneſs, than to ſet no bounds at all to the offers of his mercy, and to aſſure them, that let them behave never ſo wickedly and preſumptuouſly, and abuſe and reject all the methods of his grace, yet ſtill after they leave this world, and at any other time throughout eternity, whenever they repent, they ſhall be forgiven, and even reſtored to favour, and raiſed to glory and felicity? Would this be a rule of government worthy of the divine wiſdom, or fit to be publiſhed throughout the whole intellectual world?

As reaſon leads us to conclude, that it is neceſſary for anſwering the great ends of moral government, that puniſhments ſhould be denounced againſt the obſtinate tranſgreſſors of the divine laws, ſo it may be juſtly doubted whether to creatures deſigned for an immortal exiſtence, the threatening of none but temporary puniſhments would be ſufficient; eſpecially if they apprehended, that they ſhould outlive thoſe puniſhments for infinite ages in bliſs and glory. It certainly becometh us in our enquiries concerning ſuch matters as theſe, to proceed with great modeſty; ſince we cannot pretend of ourſelves to be proper judges of what the governing wiſdom and righteouſneſs of the

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Supreme Lord of the univerſe doth require, and what is moſt worthy of God, and moſt for the good of the whole, which is of far greater importance than the intereſts of particular beings.

To conſider the ſentence, which ſhall paſs upon bad men at the great day of judgment, as final and irreverſible; and that after this there ſhall be no freſh offers of grace and mercy; but they ſhall continue under the effects of that ſentence during the whole of their exiſtence, is certainly a conſideration of the higheſt moment, and muſt needs have a wonderful weight to engage us to make the beſt uſe of the preſent ſtate of trial allotted us, and to lay hold on the offers of ſalvation that are now made to us upon the reaſonable terms of the new covenant. Whereas if we had reaſon to apprehend, that there were to be new ſtates of trial, new ſeaſons and offers of grace, after the general judgment, it would greatly weaken the influence of the motives drawn from the threatenings of future puniſhment. Nor is there any thing in this conſtitution, which can be proved to be inconſiſtent with the wiſdom, juſtice, and equity, of the divine government. For as to the excluſion from the heavenly felicity, which ſhall be a conſiderable part of that future puniſhment, there is no reaſonable ground for expecting, that thoſe who now reject the divine grace and mercy ſhould ever be admitted to that tranſcendent bliſs and glory, which God hath been

pleaſed

pleaſed of his own free and rich goodneſs to promiſe to the righteous, and which no man could pretend to challenge as in ſtrictneſs of juſtice due to him. Nor is it any impeachment of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs to leave obſtinate ſinners during the whole courſe of their exiſtence under that part of the puniſhment which ariſeth from the ſtinging reflections of their own guilty conſciences, or from the natural effects of their wickedneſs and bad temper of mind. And whatever farther puniſhments there may be more directly and immediately inflicted by the divine hand, we may be ſure they ſhall be in ſuch meaſures and proportions to each individual, as never to exceed the demerit of their crimes. LETTER XVI.

What has been ſaid may help us to judge of the ſtrange repreſentation this author is pleaſed to make of the Scripture doctrine of future puniſhments: That " ſuch a proceeding can be " aſcribed to no principle, but to the revenge " of a being, who puniſhes to the full extent " of his power, and merely for the pleaſure of " puniſhing, and without any regard to juſtice; " creatures who did not offend him, merely " for the pleaſure of offending him, creatures " who had free-will, and made wrong elections, " creatures who might plead in mitigation of " their puniſhments, their frailties, their paſ- " ſions, the imperfections of their natures, and " the numerous temptations to which they

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"ſtood expoſed *." This repreſentation is unjuſt in every article. The tendency of it is plainly this; to apologize for ſin, and to diminiſh the evil of it. And what good can be propoſed by this is hard to ſay. Nothing can be more contrary to the honour of God, to the good of mankind, to the peace and order of the moral world, than to endeavour to make men entertain ſlight thoughts of the evil of ſin. To what purpoſe is it to ſay, that ſinners do not offend God merely for the pleaſure of offending him? If they do it for the pleaſure of gratifying their own corrupt inclinations and appetites, which they oppoſe and prefer to the moſt wiſe and holy will and law of the ſovereign Lord of the univerſe, is not this a very heinous guilt? Their having free-will, and making wrong elections, when it was in their choice to have done otherwiſe, though mentioned here in mitigation of their guilt, is a great aggravation of their crime, and an abuſe of their reaſon and liberty, which are amongſt the nobleſt gifts of God. To plead paſſions and temptations, is an excuſe, which, if admitted, may ſerve to apologize for the greateſt crimes. But they are not allowed by any wiſe human judicatories as a reaſon for exempting thoſe that tranſgreſs the laws from the penalties to which their tranſgreſſions had expoſed them. And Lord *Bolingbroke* himſelf has elſewhere very properly obſerved, that thoſe very perſons who

* Vol. V. p. 518.

pretend,

pretend, that inclinations cannot be reſtrained, and who ſpeak moſt of the power of the appetites and paſſions, can reſiſt and controul them, when any evident intereſt, or contrary inclination, leads them to do ſo *. And as to any tranſgreſſions that may properly be called frailties and infirmities, and which have little of the will in them, the wiſe and juſt Ruler of the world will no doubt make all the allowances that equity can demand. LETTER XV.

Upon the whole, the Chriſtian doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments is ſo far from furniſhing a juſt objection againſt the divine original of the Goſpel-revelation, that, if rightly conſidered, it yieldeth a noble evidence of its uſefulneſs and truth. It is ſcarce poſſible to form an idea of any thing more ſolemn and affecting, and better fitted to make a ſtrong impreſſion on the human mind, than the repreſentation given in the New Teſtament of the future judgment. The whole human race convened before the ſovereign univerſal Judge, innumerable myriads of holy angels attending; the judicial proceſs carried on with the greateſt ſolemnity, a ſtrict and impartial enquiry made, the moſt hidden actions brought to light, and the very ſecrets of the heart laid open, and all followed by eternal retributions. It ſeemeth plain from our Saviour's manner of repreſenting things, that he regarded it as a matter of great

* See his Letters on the Study and Uſe of Hiſtory, Let. III. Sect. 1.

importance,

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importance, that ſinners ſhould have no hope or expectation given them of obtaining mercy and ſalvation, if they perſiſted to the end of this preſent life in a courſe of impenitence, preſumptuous, ſin and diſobedience. He no-where giveth the leaſt intimation, that the puniſhment of the wicked in a future ſtate ſhall have an end. On the contrary, he ſtill ſpeaketh of it in terms which according to the natural import of the expreſſions ſeem to ſignify that it ſhall be of a perpetual duration, without adding any thing to qualify thoſe expreſſions. And for any perſons to flatter themſelves, that God may in his abſolute ſovereignty diſpenſe with the rigor of his threatenings, and to depend upon ſuch an expectation, would be an extreme folly, when the plain tenor of the revelation ſeems to go the other way.

I have now finiſhed the deſign I had in view, which was to defend natural and revealed religion againſt the attacks made upon both by this very confident and aſſuming author. In the execution of this deſign I have principally confined myſelf to the reaſoning part of his Lordſhip's works as far as religion is concerned, and have not willingly overlooked any thing that had the appearance of argument. But I have not attempted to follow him in ſeveral of thoſe excurſions which ſeem to have been principally intended to ſhew the variety of his reading, of which it muſt be owned there is a great appear-

ance, though I cannot ſay he has given many proofs of his having maturely digeſted it. Several things there are in his ſcheme of metaphyſics, and in the account he has given of the ſentiments of the antient philoſophers, which might juſtly be animadverted upon, though it will not be denied, that ſome of his obſervations on theſe heads are juſt and curious. But as a diſtinct examination of them would have very much enlarged this work, which is already longer than I at firſt intended, or than I would have wiſhed it to be, I have choſen to omit them: For the ſame reaſon I have taken no particular notice of the reflections he has occaſionally caſt upon the antient fathers of the Chriſtian Church, and upon the body of the primitive Chriſtians, of whom he has made a moſt injurious repreſentation, and has in effect juſtified the perſecutions raiſed by the heathens againſt them. He tells us, that "their clergy were, under pre- "tence of religion, a very lawleſs tribe.—— "That they broke the laws in the moſt public "manner, and inſtigated others to break them, "by popular inſurrections againſt the authority "of magiſtrates, and by tumults and riots, in "which they inſulted the eſtabliſhed religion of "the empire.——And he believes, the liſt of "the martyrs conſiſted more of thoſe who ſuf- "fered for breaking the peace, than of thoſe "who ſuffered quietly for the ſake of their re- "ligion *." Such is the charge he has thought LETTER XVI.

* Vol. IV. p. 434.

fit

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fit to bring againſt a worthy and peaceable body of men, for ſo the primitive Chriſtians generally were, whoſe innocent and virtuous behaviour has been acknowleged by ſome of their Pagan adverſaries themſelves.

You will obſerve, that I have, for the moſt part, except where the argument led to it, paſſed over the bitter ſarcaſm he ſo frequently throws out againſt the Chriſtian divines. They have the honour to be reviled and inſulted in every work that is deſigned againſt revealed religion. But it muſt be owned, that his Lordſhip has in obloquy and reproach far exceeded all that have gone before him. He has found out what the world did not know before, that the divines are in a formed alliance and confederacy with the Atheiſts againſt God and his providence, and that the latter are not ſuch dangerous enemies to religion as the former.

I have not thought myſelf obliged to take any diſtinct notice of the long account he has given in his fourth Eſſay of the incroachments of the eccleſiaſtical upon the civil power, and the ſeveral ſteps by which thoſe incroachments were carried on, eſpecially in the times of the papal uſurpation. He has advanced little on thoſe heads that can be called new, or which had not been obſerved by others before him. And we have his Lordſhip's own acknowlegement frequently repeated, that this is by no means chargeable on true original Chriſtianity. It would therefore be very diſingenuous to turn that

that to the diſadvantage of the religion of *Jeſus*, which has been only owing to a groſs abuſe and corruption of it, a corruption which was plainly foretold in the ſacred writings, at a time when it was impoſſible for any human ſagacity to foreſee it. LETTER XVI.

He frequently exclaims againſt artificial theology, and complains of the profane mixtures which have been brought into the Chriſtian religion by the ſubtilties of a vain philoſophy, and by idle traditions. It muſt be acknowleged, that there has often been too much ground for ſuch complaints. And to endeavour to ſeparate pure uncorrupted Chriſtianity as taught by Chriſt and his apoſtles from debaſing mixtures, and the corrupt additions that have been made to it, is undoubtedly a noble and uſeful work, and when properly performed, is doing a real ſervice to Chriſtianity, and tendeth to eſtabliſh the credit of it, and to promote its ſacred intereſts. But ſuch writers as Lord *Bolingbroke* are certainly the unfitteſt perſons in the world to undertake it.

Non tali auxilio, nec defenſoribus iſtis
Tempus eget

Inſtead of promoting the good work of reformation, and of contributing to reſtore religion in its primitive purity, they bring a diſgrace upon thoſe who would in good earneſt attempt it, and furniſh the patrons of thoſe corruptions

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with a plauſible pretence for reproaching and miſrepreſenting ſuch perſons as having an ill intention againſt Chriſtianity itſelf, and as ſerving the cauſe of Deiſts and Infidels.

His Lordſhip charges the miſchiefs which have befallen the Chriſtian Church as having been chiefly owing to this: That "the pure word of "God neither is nor has been the ſole criterion "of orthodoxy *." He aſſerts, that "no human "authority can ſupply or alter, much leſs im"prove, what the Son of God came on earth to "reveal †." He ſays, that "divines ſhould return "to the Goſpel, as philoſophers have returned to "Nature, and preſume to dogmatize no farther "than the plain import of it will juſtify ‡." And he recommends it as the moſt effectual way to remove the ſcandals ariſing from the diſſentions among Chriſtians, that the Chriſtian divines "ſhould be content to explain what they "underſtand, to adore what they underſtand "not, and to leave in myſtery all that Chriſt "and his apoſtles have left ſo ‖."

Theſe advices, conſidered in themſelves, might have been thought to proceed from a good and friendly intention. But every thing is ſuſpected that comes from ſuch a hand. Yet a real friend to Chriſtianity will know how to make a proper uſe of admonitions and reproofs, even when given by any enemy.

* Vol. IV. p. 448. † *Ib.* p. 617. ‡ *Ib.* p. 449. ‖ *Ib.* p. 629.

I ſhall

I ſhall conclude with this obſervation, That the religion of *Jeſus*, as delivered in the New Teſtament in its original purity and ſimplicity, will be ever able to ſtand its ground againſt all the aſſaults of the moſt ſubtil and moſt malicious adverſaries. It hath a dignity and excellency in it, which hath often extorted favourable acknowlegements even from thoſe who have appeared to be ſtrongly prejudiced againſt it, of which we have a remarkable inſtance in the late Lord *Bolingbroke*. And I am perſuaded, that the more any thinking man conſidereth it with a free and unprejudiced mind, the more he will admire it, and will be the more convinced of its truth and excellency, and of its divine original. You will, I doubt not, join with me in earneſt prayer to God, that this holy religion may be more univerſally diffuſed, that it may be made known to thoſe who know it not, and that where it is known and profeſſed it may have more of the happy effects which it is ſo well fitted to produce. LETTER XVI.

I am,

Reverend and dear Sir,

Moſt ſincerely and affectionately yours,

JOHN LELAND.

THE CONCLUSION.

IN AN ADDRESS TO DEISTS and PROFESSED CHRISTIANS.

HAVING endeavoured to give as clear a general view as I was able of the principal Deiſtical Writers of the laſt and preſent age, and having made large and particular remarks on the two moſt noted authors who have appeared of late among us in that cauſe, I ſhall now, as a concluſion of the whole work, take the liberty to addreſs myſelf, both to thoſe that take upon them the character of Deiſts and Free-thinkers, and who reject the Chriſtian revelation, and to thoſe who are honoured with the name of Chriſtians, and who profeſs to receive the religion of *Jeſus* as of divine authority.

The former may be ranked principally into two ſorts. They are either ſuch as taking it for granted, that Chriſtianity has been proved to be

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an impoſition on mankind, reject it at a venture, without being able to aſſign a reaſon for rejecting it, or at moſt take up with ſome ſlight objections, and content themſelves with general clamours of prieſtcraft and impoſture, without giving themſelves the trouble of making a diſtinct enquiry into the nature of the religion itſelf, or examining its proofs and evidences; or, they are ſuch as pretend to reject Chriſtianity, becauſe upon a due examination and enquiry, they have found it to be deſtitute of ſufficient proof, and have diſcovered in it the marks of falſhood and impoſture, which convince them that it cannot be of divine original. There is reaſon to apprehend, that the greater part of thoſe among us who paſs under the name of Deiſts, come under the former of theſe characters. But the conduct of ſuch perſons is ſo manifeſtly abſurd as to admit of no excuſe. For what pretence have they to glory in the title of Free-thinkers, who will not be at the pains to think cloſely and ſeriouſly at all, even in matters of the higheſt conſequence? There are few therefore who are willing to own that this is their caſe. Whether they have really given themſelves the trouble of a free and diligent examination and enquiry or not, they would be thought to have done ſo, and not to have rejected the Chriſtian revelation without having good reaſons for their unbelief. It is therefore to ſuch perſons that I would now addreſs myſelf.

Of this ſort profeſſedly are thoſe that have appeared among us under the character of Deiſtical Writers. They have made a ſhew of attacking Chriſtianity in a way of reaſon and argument. But upon the view which hath been taken of them, it may, I think, be ſafely declared, that whatever they have offered that had the face of argument, hath been ſolidly confuted, the evidences of Chriſtianity have been placed in a fair and conſiſtent light, and their objections againſt it have been ſhewn to be vain and inſufficient. Though there never were writers more confident and aſſuming, or who have expreſſed a greater admiration of themſelves, and contempt of others, it hath been ſhewn that, taking them generally, they have had little to ſupport ſuch glorious pretences: That no writers ever acted a part more unfair and diſingenuous: That though they have ſet up for advocates of natural religion in oppoſition to revealed, yet many of them have endeavoured to ſubvert the main articles even of natural religion, and have uſed arguments which bear equally againſt all religion, and tend to baniſh it out of the world: That they have often put on a ſhow of great regard for genuine original Chriſtianity, whilſt at the ſame time they have uſed their utmoſt efforts to deſtroy its evidences, and ſubvert its authority: That inſtead of repreſenting the Chriſtian religion fairly as it is, they have had recourſe to miſrepreſentation and abuſe, and have treated the

holy

holy Scriptures in a manner which would not be borne, if put in practice againſt any other antient writings of the leaſt reputation, and which is indeed inconſiſtent with all the rules of candour and decency: That with regard to the extraordinary facts by which Chriſtianity is atteſted, they have advanced principles which would be accounted perfectly ridiculous if applied to any other facts, and which really tend to deſtroy all moral evidence, and the credit of all paſt facts whatſoever: And finally, that never were there writers more inconſiſtent with themſelves, and with one another, or who have diſcovered more apparent ſigns of obſtinate prepoſſeſſion and prejudice. And ſhould not all this naturally create a ſuſpicion of a cauſe which ſtands in need of ſuch managements, and of writers who have been obliged to have recourſe to arts ſo little reconcileable to truth and candour? And yet it is to be apprehended, that many of thoſe who laugh at others for relying upon their teachers, are ready to reſign themſelves to their Deiſtical leaders, and to take their pretences and confident aſſertions, and even their jeſts and ſarcaſms, for arguments.

Many of the objections which have been produced with great pomp, and which have created ſome of the ſtrongeſt prejudices againſt Chriſtianity, are ſuch as cannot be properly urged againſt it with any appearance of reaſon at all. Such are the objections drawn from the abuſes and corruptions which have been introduced

to its original deſign, or from the ill conduct of many of its profeſſors and miniſters. For whilſt the Chriſtian religion as taught by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and delivered in the holy Scriptures, may be demonſtrated to be of a moſt uſeful and admirable nature and tendency, whilſt the proofs and evidences of it ſtand entire, and the truth of the facts whereby it was atteſted, is ſufficiently eſtabliſhed, the reaſon for embracing it ſtill holds good: And to reject a religion in itſelf excellent, for abuſes and corruptions, which many of thoſe that make the objection acknowlege are not juſtly chargeable upon true original Chriſtianity, is a conduct that cannot be juſtified, and is indeed contrary to the dictates of reaſon and good ſenſe. The ſame obſervation may be made with regard to ſome other objections which have been frequently urged againſt the Chriſtian revelation, as particularly that which is drawn from its not having been univerſally promulgated. For if the evidences which are brought to prove that Chriſtianity is a true divine revelation, and that this revelation was really given, are good and valid, then its not having been made known to all mankind will never prove, that ſuch a revelation was not given. And ſuch a way of arguing in any other caſe would be counted impertinent. It is arguing from a thing, the reaſons of which we do not know, againſt the truth and certainty of a thing that we do know, and of which we are able to bring ſufficient proofs.

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The only objections therefore or arguments, which can really be of weight againſt Chriſtianity, are thoſe which either tend to invalidate its proofs and evidences, and to ſhew that the divine atteſtations which were given to it are not to be depended upon, or which are drawn from the nature of the Revelation itſelf to ſhew that it is abſurd and unworthy of God. And accordingly both theſe have been attempted. But whoſoever will impartially conſider the writings of the Deiſtical authors, and compare them with thoſe of the advocates for Chriſtianity, will find how little they have advanced on either of theſe heads that is really to the purpoſe. The atteſtations given to Chriſtianity are of ſuch an extraordinary nature, and carry in them ſuch manifeſt proofs of a divine interpoſition, that few, if any, have ever owned the truth of thoſe facts, and yet denied the divine original of the Chriſtian revelation. Its adverſaries therefore have chiefly bent their force to deſtroy the credit of the facts. But they have not been able to invalidate the arguments which have been brought to prove that thoſe facts were really done: It hath been ſhewn, that the evidence produced for them is as great as could reaſonably be expected and deſired for any paſt facts whatſoever: That never was there any teſtimony, all things conſidered, more worthy of credit than that of the original witneſſes to thoſe facts: And that thoſe accounts have been tranſmitted to us by a conveyance ſo ſure and

uninterrupted as can hardly be paralleled in any other caſe. This has been evinced by a clear deduction of proofs, to which little has been oppoſed but conjectures and ſuſpicions of fraud, and general clamours againſt moral evidence, and human teſtimony, without taking off the form of the proofs that have been brought on the other ſide.

As to the arguments urged againſt the Chriſtian revelation from the nature of the revelation itſelf, theſe muſt relate either to its doctrines or laws. With reſpect to the laws of Chriſtianity, it cannot reaſonably be denied, that its moral precepts are pure and excellent, and have a manifeſt tendency to promote the practice of piety and virtue in its juſt extent, and the peace and good order of the world. And they are inforced with the moſt powerful and important motives that can poſſibly be conceived, and the beſt fitted to work upon the human nature.

When the moral precepts of Chriſtianity could not be juſtly found fault with, a great clamour has been raiſed againſt its poſitive precepts and inſtitutions. And yet it is capable of being proved, it hath been often clearly proved, that theſe poſitive inſtitutions taken in their primitive purity, and according to their original deſign, are admirably fitted to promote the great ends of all religion, and to ſtrengthen our obligations to a holy and a virtuous life. And this ſome of the moſt noted Deiſtical Writers

have

have not been able to deny. And it has been lately fully acknowleged by Lord *Bolingbroke*.

The only objection therefore which properly remains is againſt the doctrines of Chriſtianity. And before this objection can be properly brought to bear, two things are to be proved. The one is, that the doctrines objected againſt are doctrines of the true original Chriſtian religion as taught by Chriſt and his apoſtles, and delivered in the holy Scriptures. The other is, that theſe doctrines, as there taught, are really abſurd and contrary to reaſon. For a doctrine may be attended with great difficulties, very hard to be accounted for, and yet may be really true, and not contradictory to reaſon: Which is evidently the caſe with reſpect to ſeveral important principles of what is called natural religion. The difficulty attending any doctrine in our manner of conceiving it, is not a proper argument againſt its truth, if we have otherwiſe ſufficient evidence to convince us that that doctrine is true. And its being plainly aſſerted in a revelation proved to be divine is a ſufficient evidence. For to acknowlege a divine revelation to have been given, and yet receive nothing upon the credit of it, nothing but what we can prove to be true or at leaſt highly probable independently of that revelation, is a moſt abſurd and inconſiſtent conduct. It is to make a divine teſtimony paſs for nothing, and to pay no greater regard to a thing on account of its being divinely revealed than if it had not been revealed at all. In this caſe what is ſaid by a per-

ſon who cannot be ſuppoſed to be prejudiced in favour of Chriſtianity appears to be very reaſonable; which I ſhall here beg leave to repeat, though I had occaſion to take notice of it before, *viz.* that "when perſons have received the "Chriſtian revelation for genuine, after ſufficient examination of its external and internal proofs, and have found nothing that makes it inconſiſtent with itſelf, nor that is repugnant to any of thoſe divine truths, which reaſon and the works of God demonſtrate to them, ſuch perſons will never ſet up reaſon in contradiction to it, on account of things plainly taught, but incomprehenſible as to their manner of being: If they did, their reaſon would be falſe and deceitful, they would ceaſe to be reaſonable men *." And elſewhere after having obſerved that we cannot be obliged to believe againſt reaſon, he ſaith, that when a revelation hath paſſed through the neceſſary trials, "it is to be received with the "moſt profound reverence, with the moſt intire "ſubmiſſion, and with the moſt unfeigned "thankſgiving. Reaſon has exerciſed her whole "prerogative then, and delivers us over to faith. "To believe before all theſe trials, or to doubt "after them, is alike unreaſonable †."

And now upon ſuch a view of things you will allow me, gentlemen, ſeriouſly to expoſtulate with you, and to beſeech you to reflect whether in rejecting and endeavouring to expoſe Chri-

* Lord Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. V. p. 38;. † Ib. p. 279.

ſtianity

ſtrainly you act a wiſe and ſeaſonable part, and what is like to be the effect of your conduct both with regard to yourſelves, and to the public.

And firſt with regard to yourſelves. Conſider that the caſe now before you is not merely a matter of indifferency, or of ſmall importance. Your own moſt eſſential intereſts are nearly concerned. If the Goſpel be true and divine, to reject it will involve you in the greateſt guilt, and will expoſe you to the greateſt danger. The beſt that can be ſaid of your caſe upon ſuch a ſuppoſition is that it is infinitely hazardous. If in fact it ſhould be found, that you have rejected a true divine revelation which God himſelf hath confirmed with the moſt illuſtrious atteſtations; that you have refuſed the teſtimony which he hath given of his Son, and have poured contempt on the Saviour whom he hath in his infinite wiſdom and love provided for us; that you have ſlighted the authority of his laws, and the offers of his grace, and have deſpiſed all his glorious promiſes, and ſet at nought his awful threatenings: This cannot poſſibly be a ſlight guilt, and therefore you have reaſon in that caſe to apprehend the ſevere effects of the divine diſpleaſure. Whatever favourable allowances may be made to thoſe who never heard of the Goſpel, or had no opportunity of being inſtructed in it in its original purity, yet it is plain from the whole tenor of the Goſpel-declarations, that thoſe to whom it is clearly

clearly published, and who have its evidences plainly laid before them, and yet shut their eyes against the heavenly light, and despise its offered salvation, are in a very dangerous state. And though it may be said, that this is immediately to be understood of those who lived in the age when the Gospel was first published, yet it holds in proportion with regard to those in after-ages, to whom that revelation and its evidences are made known, and who yet wilfully reject it. For since God designed that revelation not merely for the age when it was first delivered, but for succeeding ages; and since accordingly it was so ordered, that both the revelation itself, its doctrines and laws, and an account of the divine attestations that were given to it, have been transmitted to us in such a manner, as layeth a just foundation for our being assured that this is the true original revelation, and that these facts were really done; then the obligation which lies upon those to whom that revelation is made known to receive and submit to it, and consequently the guilt of rejecting it, still subsists. Examine the revelation itself. Could you possibly expect a revelation given for nobler purposes, than to instruct us to form the most worthy notions of God, of his perfections, and of his providence, to set before us the whole of our duty in its just extent, to instruct us in the terms of our acceptance with God, to assure us of his readiness to pardon our iniquities, and to receive us to his grace and favour upon our unfeigned repentance,

ance, and to crown our ſincere though imperfect obedience with the glorious reward of eternal life? Could any revelation be expected, whoſe precepts are more pure and excellent, or inforced by more weighty motives, or the uniform tendency of which is more manifeſtly fitted to promote the cauſe of virtue and righteouſneſs in the world? Or, could any revelation, ſuppoſing a revelation really given, be attended with more illuſtrious atteſtations? Will it be an excuſe fit to be offered to the great Ruler and Judge of the world, that you did not yourſelves ſee the miracles that were wrought, nor were witneſſes to the atteſtations that were given? This is in effect to demand, that all theſe facts ſhould be done over again for your conviction, or you will not believe them. But how unreaſonable is this, when the accounts of theſe facts are tranſmitted with a degree of evidence ſufficient to ſatisfy any unprejudiced mind, an evidence which muſt be admitted, except no paſt facts at all are to be believed, and which you yourſelves would account ſufficient in any other caſe! Or, will it be accepted as a juſt excuſe, that it contains ſome doctrines which are attended with great difficulties that we are not able to account for, and which relate to things that tranſcend our comprehenſion, when at the ſame time it cannot be denied that there are ſeveral things both in religion and philoſophy which the moſt wiſe and conſidering men think it reaſonable to believe, though they are liable to objections which they

cannot give a clear ſolution of*? Or, is the true reaſon of your rejecting the Goſpel your averſion to its holy laws, and to that purity of heart and life that is there required? But is this a reaſon fit to be pleaded before God, or proper to ſatisfy your own conſciences? *This is the condemnation*, ſaith our Saviour, that light is come *into the world, but men have loved darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil.* If this ſhould be found to be really your caſe, and the true cauſe of your oppoſition to the Goſpel, your guilt is of a very aggravated nature! It is to hate and oppoſe the light that ſhould convince and reform you, and to make the very excellency of the Goſpel a reaſon for rejecting it. The beſt and wiſeſt men in all ages have owned the neceſſity of keeping the appetites and paſſions within proper bounds, and in a juſt ſubjection to the dominion of reaſon. And this is the great deſign of the Chriſtian law. And yet its precepts are not carried to an unreaſonable rigour and auſterity: It is not deſigned to extinguiſh the paſſions, but to moderate them, and allows them to be gratified within the bounds of temperance and innocence. Its precepts if reduced to practice, would

* One of the moſt ſubtil writers that have of late appeared againſt Chriſtianity, ſays, "that no prieſtly dogmas ever ſhocked common ſenſe ſo much as the infinite diviſibility of matter with its conſequences," which yet has not hindered the ableſt mathematicians from believing it to be demonſtrably true. And he gives ſome other inſtances of the like kind. See Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 346, 347.

both

both tend to the true dignity and perfection of our nature, and lay a just foundation for an inward tranquility and satisfaction of mind, and for a true moral liberty, the noblest liberty in the world; as no slavery is to be compared to a moral servitude, which consisteth in a vassalage to the vicious appetites and passions. A life led in conformity to the Gospel precepts, is, whatever you may think of it, the most delightful life in the world. It tendeth to improve and enlarge the social affections, to inspire an universal benevolence, to render men good and useful in every relation, and to restrain and govern those furious and malignant passions of envy, hatred, and revenge, which carry torment and bitterness in their nature. It directs us to a rational piety and devotion towards God, and tends to produce a noble and ingenuous confidence in him, and an entire resignation to his will, and to refresh and chear the soul with a consciousness of the divine approbation. To this add the satisfactions and joys arising from all the wonders of the divine grace and goodness as display'd in the Gospel, from the charms of redeeming love, and the great things Christ hath done and suffered for our salvation, from the glorious promises of the new covenant, from the gracious aids and influences of the Holy Spirit, and from the ravishing and transporting prospects that are before us. A blessed resurrection and immortal life! You will be ready perhaps to charge this as enthusiasm. But I see no reason

for it, except the nobleſt emotions of the human mind, and the exerciſe of our beſt affections upon the beſt and moſt excellent objects, muſt paſs under that name. Conſider, I beſeech you, what valuable privileges, what divine ſatisfactions, what raviſhing proſpects you deprive yourſelves of by your infidelity! And what have you in exchange, but perplexing doubts and uncertainties, gloomy proſpects, and what you will hardly be able to get intirely rid of, anxious ſuſpicions and fears enough, where they prevail, to mar the comfort and ſatisfaction of life!

But let me now in the next place deſire you to reflect upon what may be the conſequences of your conduct with regard to the public. There are great and general complaints, and it were to be wiſhed there was not a juſt foundation for them, of a diſſoluteneſs of manners which ſeems to be growing among us. This is a matter in which the intereſts of the community are very nearly concerned. When once the corruption ſpreads through all orders and degrees of perſons, thoſe in higher and in lower ſtations, it muſt needs be attended with a perverſion of all public order, and ſaps the very foundation of the public glory and happineſs. In proportion as vice and diſſoluteneſs prevails, it produces a neglect of honeſt induſtry, trade conſequently decays, fraud and violence increaſe, the reverence of oaths is loſt, and all the ties and bands that keep ſociety together are in dan-

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ger of being diſſolved. *Machiavel* himſelf has decided, that a free government cannot be long maintained, when once a people are become generally corrupt. All true friends therefore to the public order and liberty muſt wiſh that virtue may flouriſh, and that men's vicious appetites and paſſions may be kept under proper reſtraints. And nothing is ſo fit to anſwer this end as religion. If the influence of religion were removed from the minds of men, and there were no fear of God before their eyes, civil laws would be found feeble reſtraints. This the ableſt politicians have been ſenſible of, and never was there any civilized government that did not take in religion for its ſupport. And it may be eaſily proved that never was there any religion ſo well fitted for anſwering all theſe purpoſes as the Chriſtian. The two lateſt writers who have appeared againſt Chriſtianity have made full acknowlegements of the great uſefulneſs of religion, eſpecially that part of it which relateth to future rewards and puniſhments, to public communities: Though both of them have moſt inconſiſtently endeavoured to ſubvert that doctrine of future retributions, the belief of which they own to be neceſſary for preſerving public peace and order. Mr. *Hume* ſpeaking of the received notions, that "the Deity will inflict puniſhments on vice "and infinite rewards on virtue," ſays, that "thoſe who attempt to diſabuſe them of ſuch "prejudices may, for aught he knows, be good "reaſoners,

" reaſoners, but he cannot allow them to be " good citizens and politicians; ſince they free " men from one reſtraint upon their paſſions, and " make the infringement of the laws of equity " and ſociety, in one reſpect, more eaſy and " ſecure *." Lord *Bolingbroke* ſpeaking of thoſe who " contrived religion for the ſake of govern- " ment obſerves, that they ſaw that the public " external religion would not anſwer their end, " nor inforce effectually the obligations of vir- " tue and morality, without the doctrine of " future rewards and puniſhments †." And he ſays, " the doctrine of rewards and puniſh- " ments in a future ſtate has ſo great a ten- " dency to enforce the civil laws, and to re- " ſtrain the vices of men," that reaſon which, as he pretends, " cannot decide for it on prin- " ciples of natural theology, will not decide " againſt it on principles of good policy ‡." And it is certain, that no religion placeth thoſe future retributions in ſo ſtrong and affecting a light as Chriſtianity does. The laſt-mentioned author goes ſo far as to ſay, that " if the con- " flict between virtue and vice in the great com- " monwealth of mankind was not maintained " by religious and civil inſtitutions, the human " life would be intolerable ‖." And now, I think, I may juſtly expoſtulate with thoſe gen- tlemen, who do what they can to propagate in- fidelity among us. What real good to mankind;

* Hume's Philoſophical Eſſays, p. 231. † Bolingbroke's Works, Vol. IV. p. 60. ‡ *Ib.* Vol. V. p. 322. ‖ *Ib.* p. 227.

what

what benefit to the ſociety or community can you propoſe by endeavouring to expoſe Chriſtianity, its miniſtry and ordinances to contempt, and to ſubvert its divine authority, and thereby deſtroy its influence on the minds and conſciences of men? Can you propoſe to aſſert and promote the cauſe of virtue by taking away its ſtrongeſt ſupports, and thoſe motives which have the greateſt tendency to engage men to the practice of it? Or, can you propoſe to put a check to abounding licentiouſneſs, by removing the moſt powerful reſtraints to vice and wickedneſs? If it be ſo hard to reſtrain the corruption of mankind, and to keep their diſorderly appetites within proper bounds, even taking in all the aids of religion, and the amazing power of thoſe motives which Chriſtianity furniſheth, what could be expected, if all theſe were diſcarded, and men were left to gratify their paſſions without the dread of a ſupreme Governor and Judge? Surely then, however unfavourable to Chriſtianity your private ſentiments might be, you ought for the ſake of the public to conceal them, if you would approve yourſelves true lovers of your country, and zealous for the liberty and proſperity of it, and not take pains to propagate principles which in their conſequences muſt have the worſt influence on the peace, the welfare, and good order of the community. If what Lord *Bolingbroke* ſaith is true, that "no religion ever appeared in the world, "whoſe natural tendency was ſo much directed "to promote the peace and happineſs of man-

" kind as the Chriſtian religion conſidered as " taught by Chriſt and his apoſtles *;" with what face or conſiſtency can theſe pretend to public ſpirit, or to a concern for the public happineſs, who uſe their utmoſt efforts to ſubvert it, and repreſent its important motives as vain bugbears? Eſpecially how can ſuch perſons pretend to be real friends to the preſent conſtitution and government, which is founded on an attempt to maintain Chriſtianity in its purity as delivered in the holy Scriptures, a zeal for which will always prove its greateſt ſecurity?

I hope, gentlemen, you will forgive the freedom of this expoſtulatory addreſs, which is not deſigned to reproach you, or to return railing for railing, which our holy religion forbids, but proceeds from an earneſt concern for your happineſs, and for promoting your beſt intereſts here and hereafter, as well as from a deſire, as far as my ability reaches, to ſerve the public, the welfare of which is very nearly concerned in the conſequences of your conduct.

I ſhall now beg leave to addreſs myſelf to thoſe who profeſs to value themſelves upon the name of Chriſtians; a name truly glorious, expreſſive of the moſt ſacred obligations and engagements, the moſt valuable privileges, and the moſt ſublime hopes. But the bare name of Chriſtians will be of little advantage without the true ſpirit and practice of Chriſtianity. And it is impoſſible for any friend to religion and to mankind to obſerve without a very ſenſible concern, what numbers there are of thoſe who

* Vol. IV. p. 291. would

would take it ill not to be called and accounted Chriſtians, that yet take little care to act ſuitably to that ſacred and honourable character.

Many profeſſed Chriſtians there are, who ſcarce ever beſtow a ſerious thought upon thoſe things which it is the great deſign of the Goſpel to inculcate on the hearts and minds of men. Let me deſire ſuch perſons to reflect a little what an inconſiſtent conduct they are guilty of. To profeſs to believe that God hath ſent his Son from Heaven with meſſages of grace to ſinful men, and to bring diſcoveries of the higheſt importance, in which our everlaſting ſalvation is very nearly concerned, and yet not to allow theſe things a place in their thoughts, and to prefer the vrieſt trifles before them! Will you dare to ſay in words, that you do not think it worth your while to attend to what God thought fit to ſend his own Son to reveal? Why then do you act as if you thought ſo? No pretence of worldly buſineſs, though it is our duty to be diligent in it, can excuſe an utter habitual inconſideration and neglect of thoſe things, which, by profeſſing to believe Chriſtianity, we profeſs to believe to be of the greateſt importance. Much leſs will a hurry of diverſions be allowed to be a ſufficient excuſe. And yet how many are there whoſe time is taken up in low trifling pleaſures and amuſements, and who make that which at beſt ſhould only be the entertainment of a vacant hour, the very buſineſs of their lives! It is to be lamented, that this is too often the caſe with perſons diſtinguiſhed by their birth,

their fortunes and figure in the world. As if all the advantage they propoſed by thoſe ſhining diſtinctions, was only the privilege of leading idle unmeaning lives, uſeleſs to themſelves, and to the community. Can reaſonable creatures think that by ſuch a conſtant trifling away their precious time, they anſwer the end of their beings, the end for which they had the noble powers of reaſon given them? As if they were ſent into the world only to divert themſelves. Much leſs can Chriſtians believe that they were formed for no higher and more valuable purpoſes. How often are the duties of the church and cloſet, thoſe of the ſocial relations, the care of children and of families, the kind offices and exerciſes of a noble and generous benevolence towards the poor, the indigent, the afflicted and diſconſolate, neglected and poſtponed, for the ſake of the moſt trifling amuſements; an immoderate fondneſs and attachment to which tends, even when it is leaſt hurtful, to produce a diſinclination to ſerious thought, and to impair the reliſh for that which is truly good, excellent, and improving!

But this is ſtill worſe, when what are called diverſions, tend to lay ſnares for virtue and innocence, and open the way to ſcenes of diſſoluteneſs and debauchery. Or, when what is called play and amuſement is carried to ſuch an exceſs as to hurt and ſquander away fortunes, which might be employed to the moſt valuable and uſeful purpoſes, and thereby diſables perſons of diſtinguiſhed rank from the duties they owe to their families, and to the community, from

ſtom the exerciſe of generous charity and benevolence, and even of juſtice too. To which may be added the tendency it often hath to excite and exerciſe unworthy and diſorderly paſſions, and to produce the habits of fraud, falſehood, and a baſe and illiberal thirſt after gain.

If our own obſervation and experience did not convince us of it, one would ſcarce think there could be perſons who profeſs to believe the Goſpel, and to acknowlege its divine authority, and yet live in an habitual neglect of its public worſhip and ſacred inſtitutions; or if they keep up ſome outward form of this, indulge themſelves in a practice contrary to all the rules of virtue and morality. Of all characters the moſt inconſiſtent is a wicked and vicious Chriſtian, which to any one that is acquainted with the true nature and deſign of Chriſtianity, ſeems to be a kind of contradiction in terms. For nothing is more evident than that a bad and diſſolute life is the moſt manifeſt contradiction to the whole deſign of the Goſpel revelation. What a ſtrange inconſiſtency is it for perſons to profeſs themſelves the diſciples of the holy *Jeſus*, and yet to counteract the very end he came into the world for! To profeſs to hope for ſalvation from him as promiſed in the Goſpel, and yet to neglect the neceſſary terms without which we are there aſſured ſalvation is not to be obtained! To believe that he came to deſtroy the works of the devil, and yet allow themſelves in thoſe works which he came to deſtroy! What an unamiable

representation do such persons make of Christianity, if a judgment were to be formed of it from their conduct and practice! You would perhaps conceive a horror at the thought of blaspheming Christ, and openly renouncing all hope of salvation from him, and yet the plain tendency of your practice is to harden the hearts of infidels, and give occasion to the enemies of Christianity to blaspheme. And should not you tremble to think of being charged as accessory to the indignities and reproaches cast on that venerable name into which you were baptized, and on that excellent system of religion, whose divine original you profess to believe? Surely then it highly concerneth you, for your own sakes and that of the Gospel, to set yourselves heartily to reform a conduct so irreconcilable to all the rules of reason, and to your own most evident interests. Implore the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, and the assistances of his grace, which shall not be wanting to the truly penitent, and shew yourselves Christians, by endeavouring to get your souls effectually brought under the influence of our holy religion, the natural tendency of which, wherever it is sincerely believed and embraced, is to inspire an ingenuous hope, confidence, and joy.

I shall conclude therefore with laying a few advices before those who take upon them the name of Christians, and who profess to receive the Gospel as of divine authority.

And 1. Let us be thankful to God for our glorious privileges. It is our unspeakable advantage, that

that we are not left merely to the uncertain lights, or feeble conjectures of our own unaſſiſted reaſon in matters of the higheſt importance. We have God himſelf inſtructing us by his word concerning his own glorious perfections, and his governing providence, as extending to the individuals of the human race, diſplaying all the riches of his grace and goodneſs towards periſhing ſinners, ſetting our duty before us in its juſt extent, and animating us to the practice of it by the moſt exceeding great and precious promiſes, and aſſuring us of the aids of his Holy Spirit to aſſiſt our weak endeavours. We are raiſed to the moſt glorious hopes and views. A happineſs is provided for us as the reward of our patient continuance in well-doing, tranſcending all that we are now able to expreſs, or even to conceive. Theſe things certainly call for a devout admiration and adoring thankfulneſs, and for all the returns of love and gratitude that are in our power. Our civil liberties are juſtly to be valued, but our privileges as Chriſtians are of a yet higher and nobler nature.

2dly, Another thing which naturally follows upon this is, that we ſhould conſider and improve the revelation we profeſs to believe, and that we ſhould endeavour to be well acquainted with it, eſpecially as it is contained in the holy Scriptures. There thoſe diſcoveries are to be found which God was pleaſed to make of his will at ſundry times and in divers manners, by the mouth of his holy prophets; but eſpecially there is that laſt and moſt perfect revelation he

gave by his well-beloved Son. We are ready to think they had a mighty advantage who ſaw our Saviour in the fleſh, who heard his excellent diſcourſes, and were witneſſes to his holy life, and to the miracles he performed. And in the ſacred writings we have all theſe things faithfully recorded. Thoſe very diſcourſes which he delivered are there tranſmitted to us, with an account of the wonderful works he did, his moſt holy and uſeful life, and moſt perfect example. What a ſtrange inconſiſtent conduct would it be, to profeſs to believe that there is a revelation given from Heaven relating to matters of the higheſt moment, and that this revelation is contained in the holy Scriptures, and yet to ſuffer the Bible to lie neglected by us, as if this which is the moſt worthy of all our attention, were the only book that deſerved no attention at all! Let us therefore ſearch the Scriptures, which are able to make us wiſe unto ſalvation. And if we meet with difficulties there, as may juſtly be expected in ſuch antient writings, and which relate to a great variety of things, ſome of them of a very extraordinary nature, let not this diſcourage us. For beſides that by a careful conſidering and comparing the Scriptures themſelves, and making a proper uſe of the helps that are afforded us, we may have the ſatisfaction of having many of thoſe difficulties cleared up to us, it muſt be obſerved, that thoſe things that are moſt neceſſary to be known, and which are of the greateſt importance, are there moſt plainly revealed, and frequently inculcated; and theſe things

things we ſhould eſpecially labour to get impreſſed upon our hearts and conſciences.

But that which ſhould be our principal concern, is, to take care that our whole converſation be ſuch as becometh the Goſpel of Chriſt, worthy of our glorious privileges and ſublime hopes. He muſt be an utter ſtranger to Chriſtianity who is not ſenſible that it lays us under the moſt ſacred obligations, and gives us the greateſt helps and encouragements to a holy and virtuous practice. Let us therefore, as we would ſecure our own ſalvation and happineſs, and would promote the honour of our bleſſed Redeemer, and of the revelation he brought from Heaven, endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour by all the virtues of a ſober, a righteous, and godly life. A mere form of godlineſs will not be ſufficient: The power, the energy, the beauty of religion, muſt appear in our whole temper and conduct. This is in a peculiar manner expected of thoſe who are honoured with the character of the miniſters of the holy *Jeſus*. And when the miniſters of religion are careful to govern themſelves by its excellent rules, it tends to attract the veneration and eſteem even of thoſe who are apt to take all occaſions to vilify that ſacred order. But the Goſpel is not deſigned merely for any particular order of men, but to extend its influence to perſons of all orders and degrees. And how amiable is the idea of a Chriſtian acting up to the obligations of Chriſtianity!

Conſider him in the exerciſe of piety and devotion towards God, diligent in attending on the

ordinances of religion, filled with a profound reverence of the divine Majesty, with a devout admiration of the supreme original Goodness and Excellence, his soul rising in grateful emotions towards his sovereign Benefactor, exercising an unrepining submission and resignation to his will, and a steady dependence on his providence, rejoicing in Christ Jesus as his Saviour and Lord, in the beauties of his example, and in the wonders of his love.

But the religion of a real Christian is not confined to immediate acts of devotion. It influenceth and animateth his whole conduct. It teacheth him to render unto all their dues, to be strictly just and generously honest, to behave suitably in every relation, the *conjugal*, *parental*, and *filial* relation, and to fulfil the duties of the *civil* and *social* life. It tendeth to suppress the bitter and malevolent affections, and to diffuse a sweetness and complacency through his whole behaviour. It maketh him ready to bear with the infirmities of others, to rejoice in their happiness, and endeavour to promote it, and instead *of being overcome with evil, to overcome evil with good.*

Behold him in another view, as exercising a noble self-government, keeping his appetites and passions under a proper discipline, and in a regular subjection to the laws of religion and reason, disdaining to dishonour and defile his body and soul with unclean lusts, and vicious excesses, yet not unreasonably austere, but allowing himself the chearful use of the innocent pleasures and enjoyments of life, and every en-